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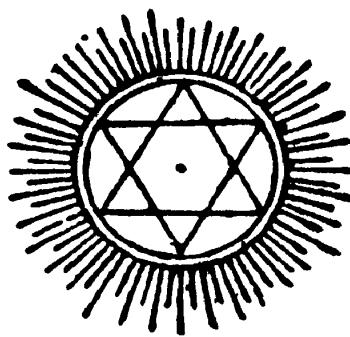








# LIGHTS ON THE ANCIENTS



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## NOTE

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Section Two: the first article in *The Sunday Times* (August 13, 1950); the second and the third in *The Advent Quarterly* Vol. IX No. 3 and Vol. X No. 2 respectively.



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## **SECTION ONE**



# I

## SPIRITUAL ACHIEVEMENT ANCEINTS AND OURSELVES

IN asking me to write for the Jayanti Issue, 'Synergist' of *Mother India* suggests that I may take up the question of spiritual achievements of the ancients with special reference to the ideal of Supermind as conceived and described in the writings of Sri Aurobindo. He is prompted, I understand, to make the choice for me from discussions and doubts expressed in some quarters in regard to the statement of Sri Aurobindo that the Vedic sages did not arrive at the Supermind for Earth or did not make the attempt at all. In taking up this subject let me at the outset state that there is nothing of importance left unsaid or obscure by the Master which we can think of and put in writing here. Besides, basing themselves on the authority of his statements, well-known writers have followed in his footsteps and discoursed upon the nature of the Supermind and the preliminary, the preparatory work that is done and yet to be done for its advent. I propose, therefore, to contribute to this subject, not anything new or different from what has been stated by others, but something that may interest the discriminating mind to

know and find for itself the basis or bases of Sri Aurobindo's statement in regard to the Supermind; and in doing so it is necessary to state at the very beginning what the term connotes and what it does not. We shall also take into account the ancient achievements in the realm of the Spirit and their conceptual imagery, where *anna*, *prāṇa*, *manas*, Matter, Life and Mind etc. are spoken of in the Upanishads and in the latter Vedantic texts.

Now, first about the Supermind. It is a term coined and used by Sri Aurobindo in a definite sense to denote a principle which governs the fourth term, *\*vyāhṛiti*, in the hierarchy of the sevenfold plane of being. It is a principle, not a mere principle, but a plane and a world—a plane of Knowledge and Truth in which the Many and the One are harmonised naturally, a spontaneous manifold unity in which Knowledge and Power are inalienable, or the one is the figure of another. This Supermind which is of a Divine world and plane above the Ignorance, above the triple world of matter, life and mind, is a world of Light and Truth. Something essential in it could be brought down and made a part, a central part of the human being and consciousness, and as a result man can be changed into the terms of the Divine descending with the Supermind, his body and life and mind transfigured into the superior spiritual and divine counterparts in the Truth-Consciousness whose plenary home is the Sun-World. And the Sun is the symbol used by the ancients to connote this Supreme Light of the Truth. Such an advent of the supernal Light for Earth is not only possible,

but is inevitable, says Sri Aurobindo and he has elaborated upon this theme in hundreds of letters in addition to the volumes of his well-known writings on the subject. Now let us quote his very words in this connection from the *Riddle of this World* (P. 2): "The Vedic Rishis never attained to the Supermind for the earth or perhaps did not even make the attempt. They tried to rise individually to the supramental plane, but they did not bring it down and make it a permanent part of the earth-consciousness." The last part of the sentence requires elucidation for a fuller grasp by the reader who is not quite familiar with the central thought of this teaching. We shall come to that later on; here we may first dispose of the question of the basis of the statement quoted above. A disciple, an intelligent follower of Sri Aurobindo does not raise the question because he has no doubt whatever in this regard. For when words fall from the Master, he knows and is convinced that Sri Aurobindo never utters words from sheer speculation concerning matters of the Spirit. When he sees a truth, he primarily bases his utterance on that perception and secondarily adduces reasons where necessary for the enlightenment of the enquiring mind. When a hunter enters a forest his observing eye detects the kinds of denizens, tiger, bear, deer, lion or porcupine that inhabit it by the footprints they leave and other marks they throw on the surrounding wild vegetation. A man, when he is in a wood, can easily discover if human feet have trodden the earth there and if he finds marks of human habitation or finds a trodden track, he can follow

where it leads and discern the parting of the ways, if any, or can still walk alone until the path ends abruptly or meets with obstruction from an impenetrable block of wood or rock and then find that the wild country is not passable and no man has ever walked it. The same can be said of the Yigin, especially of the path-finder of the Integral Yoga. For a set purpose when he shuts the doors of the senses and withdraws the outgoing mind and gets above it, in order to rise above to the higher levels of being, he does so to discover the hidden truths in the higher consciousness and lays hold on the clues, wherever possible, that may lead to the higher heights, studies the actualities of the situation, discerns the achievements of the past, ponders over and decides upon the possibilities of the present endeavour. Rising from heights to heights, as did the Vedic seer of yore, plateau upon plateau, from peak to peak, he sees much that is yet to be done and achieved, but has not been ventured so far by any before him. He finds no sign, no pointer, no evidence in the vast country of the highest levels of the pure and luminous mind or still above in what is called the Overmind, to show the track, if any, trodden before, that freely leads to the Sun-World, the world of Truth-Consciousness, much less does he find any trace of return passage that leads step by step down from the Supramental World of Solar Light to the world of mind, life and matter.

This actual seeing, this direct perception of what has taken place, of what has not taken place before, is the basis of the statement that the Vedic sages did not arrive at the

Supermind for the earth. This is convincing enough so far as the disciple and a faithful follower of Sri Aurobindo is concerned. But for others, this may not be enough, they may require other proofs based on grounds of reason. Well, here we shall confine ourselves to the Hymns of the Rig Veda, as it is the Vedic sages that first concern us most. Let us then have a clear idea of the spiritual goal the Vedic seer set before himself and strove after; and this we can gather directly from the Hymns. As a matter of serious concern we leave aside the exoteric religion and ritualistic meaning of the Riks as has come down to us through the Brahmanas and some popular beliefs, and look to the true significance of the Yajna, the inner sacrifice and call it for our purpose here the Vedic Yoga. The Rishi's goal is to arrive at the Sun of Truth, the World of the Supernal Light. The means he adopts and the process of the Yoga and arrival at the goal may be stated summarily in a few sentences so that we may later cite instances from the Hymns to substantiate our view of what the sages strove for. The Sadhak of the Vedic Yoga by *tapasyā*, discipline, qualified himself for initiation into worship of Agni, the youngest of the Gods who carries the offerings of the Sadhak to the other Powers of the Godhead, the Gods of whom Indra is the chief. He is the Divine Will, the Immortal; when born in man the mortal, he manifests himself as the flaming force that mounts higher and higher burning and devouring on the way all that opposes the onward march, lights up the darkened passages and lightens the burden of the worshipper since he takes upon himself the

lead to arrive at the realm of the Gods and bring them down also to crown the worshipper's worship with success. Once he is born in man, and accepts his mission there is no halt, he brooks no opposition, and in his advance he assumes or is reborn, or transforms himself into other Personalities of the Godhead and functions accordingly. Or he retains his Personality and in conjunction with the other Higher Powers achieves the object of the worshipper, the offering of the Soma, the delight of all his experiences to Indra, the Divine Mind, the Lord of the luminous pure Mind, Swar. When he accepts and is pleased, drunk with delight he gets stronger and stronger in man, dissipates all darkness, breaks forth the clouds of Vritra, the Asura who obstructs and covers, and releases the Waters, streams of Conscious Energy from the rock, the hill of material existence, or pours down the Rain from the Immortal's world of heaven, the Rain of Consciousness-Force that descends from above. As a result he effects the release of the Cows—the Rays of the Sun and lastly the Sun, the Sun of Truth-Consciousness, Truth-Light is won for the worshipper, the Sadhak of the Vedic Yoga. This in sum is the process of the Vedic Yoga which aims at the winning of the Immortal Truth for the Sadhak. The beginning is made when Agni, the Divine Will, the Immortal in the mortal is kindled and fully awakened and grows into flame increasing in volume and strength by the progressive surrendering of the Vedic Yогin himself and whatever is his to the Godhead; and when the process advances something of the Cosmic Powers of the Godhead is mani-

fested in the Yogin enabling him to prepare for the great consummation which is the Revelation of the Sun of Truth which he beholds for ever, *sadā paśyanti sūryah*, or which he arrives at and prays for to live in.

In all this nowhere do we find that the Rishi prays for the advent of the Sun of Truth for the benefit and transformation of man in his kind. But he always prays for the favour of the Immortal Powers while he lives on earth, and for life in the world of Immortals hereafter. There are prayers quite plain to show that the ultimate goal set before the Vedic seers is to get established in the Immortal world of undying Light where the Sun of Truth shines for ever. We may refer the reader to a hymn in the ninth Book of the Rig Veda, the last hymn but one where the Rishi describes and prays for arriving at the Sun-world where he may get settled in the Immortal. Riks 7 to 11 are an apt and typical illustration of the longings of the Vedic seer:

“Settle me in that Immortal world that never decays nor dies, wherein the Light of Heaven, the Sun-world is set and the Lustre shines for ever....”(7)

“Make me immortal in that realm where the brilliant Vivaswan’s son reigns, where flow the Waters, the mighty streams (of Conscious Energy)....”(8)

“Make me immortal in that realm where the luminous worlds are full of lustres...”(9)

“Make me immortal in that world where are found fulfilled all eager wishes and strong longings, where is found the Domain of the Sun...”(10)

“Make me immortal in that realm where are all joys and raptures, where are all delights and contentments...”(11)

These are a few relevant passages chosen from the last five Riks of the hymn, a full translation being found not necessary for our purpose here. From this, we can have an idea of the supreme aim of the Vedic Rishi's which is to arrive at the Sun-world, symbolic (not the physical sun) of the Truth-Consciousness, the Eternal Light and joy undecaying, which in our parlance is the Supermind. This much as regards the Vedic goal. Even in the means adopted for this achievement there are indications in the Hymns that the Rishi aims at this goal. As stated earlier, the means adopted is first the kindling of the Agni, the awakening of the Immortal Flame, the Divine Will, and feeding it by self-offering to grow and lead towards the Godhead, the Sun of Truth which is his own home. In a hymn addressed to the All-Gods, *viśve devāḥ*, the Rishi proclaims that he has yoked his soul to the Pole, the Leader within,—here Sayana explains he is the indwelling Godhead, ‘*antaryāmi devah*’—like a steed to the shaft of a car and bears it i.e. that which bears us and gives us succour. He adds, that he does not seek for release, nor would he retrace and turn back. For the Leader within knows the path and is sure to lead him straight. Here is an English translation of the Rik (V. 46. 1):

“I have yoked myself well-knowing, like a steed to the Pole. I bear that which bears us and gives succour. I seek

no release, nor do I turn back. May he who knows the path, the Leader, lead me straight."

Here again, one finds that the Vedic seer offers himself to the Indweller, that he may lead in the path of the Sacrifice, Yajna, the goal of which is, indeed, the Sun-World. Instances can be multiplied to show that the common conception of the Vedic sages, and their Ideal was to win for themselves the World of the Solar Light of Truth and Immortality in the Beyond, *tamasas parastāt*. They did not aim at, or even seem to have conceived the idea of bringing down something of the Solar Splendour here on earth and for earth. They had realisations of the Cosmic Gods and the Godhead, and that qualified them for getting established, on departure from earth, in that Immortal World of the Solar Effulgence. It is not that they were unaware of, and insensitive to the sufferings of fellow-beings groping in the dark, but they did not think of or seek the remedy for the countless ills of the darkened earth to be found in the descent of the Truth-Consciousness from the Solar world. On the other hand, they thought of it and prayed for a common thought, common feeling, common goal, which would pave the way for an increasing harmony that would make for lesser misery and increasing happiness among fellow beings. The hymn 191 in the tenth Book of the Rig Veda is clear on this point. Sri Aurobindo had obviously this hymn in mind when he wrote in the *Ideal of Human Unity* these lines: "For that essentially must be the aim of the religion of humanity, as

it must be the earthly aim of all human religion, love, mutual recognition of human brotherhood, a living sense of human oneness and practice of human oneness in thought, feeling and life, the ideal which was expressed first some thousands of years ago in the ancient Vedic hymn and must always remain the highest injunction of the Spirit within us to human life upon earth."

Now, we can very well say that the Vedic sages did not conceive of a cure for the human ills to be found in the Truth-Consciousness getting established in man on earth, and therefore the question of an attempt to that effect does not arise. Sri Aurobindo himself says 'perhaps (they) did not even make the attempt'. And this can also mean, according to some, perhaps they made the attempt and did not succeed. This is quite possible; only we do not find instances in the Rig Veda that would enable us to hold that here was an attempt made, but it did not succeed. There is another alternative and that is perhaps the well-established idea in the minds of the Vedic sages that it was an impossible proposition to think of viz. to bring down the Truth-Consciousness so as to make it part of the earth-consciousness and because of this idea of impossibility naturally settled in their minds, there was no attempt, not to speak of the means, not even a proper conception of the question at all. The absence of a tradition to this effect is a factor that must be taken into account to appreciate the authentic words of the Master in this behalf. Indeed, well-equipped they were with their high achievements in the Godward spheres for such a high

endeavour and could have made an attempt. The failure to make the attempt, or the failure to succeed in the attempt if it had been made at all which is a gratuitous conjecture, has had its consequences on the trend of philosophic thought of India in latter times.

Let us now turn to the Upanishads: on the same page in the *Riddle*, the Master has stated: "Even there are verses in the Upanishad in which it is hinted that it is impossible to pass through the gates of the Sun (the symbol of the Supermind) and yet retain an earthly body." "Through the gates of the Sun they pass there where is the immortal Being whose self of Spirit wastes not nor perishes", says the Mundaka Upanishad. There are passages in the Maitri Upanishad to this effect, and this idea is there in some of the Yoga Upanishads also. Apart from this, the Upanishads, the major ones, could very well have made mention of the ideal of the Vedic sages if that Ideal were to bring down the Solar Truth for the earth; but they proclaim the ideal of Brahma-loka, the supremest World of Light Immortal which is the same as the Sun-world of Supermind as the ideal to be achieved. And that is a world from which there is no return. *Sālokya*, equal status, and *sāyujya*, conscious union form the goal of the endeavours of these ancient sages. Knowledge of Atman, realisation of Brahman as the All while man lives on earth is the goal here and on departure one goes forth to the worlds above the highest of which is the Supreme abode, called variously Brahma-loka, the Sun-world etc.; or one realises the Atman in

the depths, and is absorbed, *laya*, in which case the question of departure does not arise. And this last kind of liberation which is absorption, *laya*, is supported by some of the major Upanishads notably the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, in some of its sections. Barring this, the Upanishads—we confine ourselves to the ten major ones—speak of the soul arriving at the Supreme world from which there is no return. As for the body, it is taken for granted that it does not escape from the grasp of death. We can state in a few lines what the Upanishads say about this body and the soul's departure and non-return from the world of Supermind.

The Isha Upanishad which takes a comprehensive view of Creation and its Lord, the apparently irreconcilable opposites, such as Enjoyment and Renunciation, Knowledge and Ignorance, Birth and Death etc. says: "Of this body ashes are the end." The Kena says: "If here thou hast known Him, then thou hast lived truly. If thou hast not known Him in this mortal life, then great is the perdition." Here it is taken for granted that the body perishes some day, and the soul departs, there is nothing further for the body to achieve, when the soul has known here. The Katha Upanishad says "If before the body drops down one has been able to apprehend (It) here, then is one fit for embodiment in the worlds (that are his creations)." In the Prashna Upanishad the sages approach Pippalada the teacher for that Knowledge by which they can be taken across the other shore of Ignorance. And in the answer to the first of the six ques-

tions, we find that the Sun-world is the source of all forces and is the Immortal, free from danger. It is the Supreme resort from which there is no return. Again in the Mundaka Upanishad (III.2.6): "The strivers after Truth, they who have made certain of the nature of things by knowledge that is the end of the Veda and are purified in their being by Yoga of renunciation, in their time of ultimate end become absolute and immortal and they are released into the worlds of the Eternal." (Sri Aurobindo's translation.) The last passage in the Mandukya puts in brief the ideal it sets before the seeker. "The Om without part is the transcendental state of supreme Bliss, void of phenomenal existence and duality. This Om is Atman. He who knows this enters the Atman." And the Aitareya says that Vamadeva, having got over this world by means of Brahman as awareness, *prajñāna*, and got all objects of his desires in the regions of Heaven, became immortal. The Taittiriya which of all the Upanishads best affords, like the Isha in some respects, a broad basis for the Yoga and Philosophy of the Supermind, teaches that the Knower of Brahman attains to the Supreme and, indeed, it reveals the truth about the gradations, levels and aspects of the Brahman, and the coverings, rather sheaths, of the Purusha which have great bearing upon the practical aspect. For that leads to the realisation of the separate elements severally that sheathe the being, the Purusha with the corresponding layers of consciousness or on the various levels of being. We shall return to this part of the teachings of the Tait-

tiriya when we come to consider the difference between the spiritual achievement of the ancients in regard to Vijnana and the present endeavour to achieve the realisation of the supermind for earth. One more among the major Upanishads is the Chhandogya and its last word is that the soul arriving at the Brahmaloka which is the same as the abode of the Supreme, the Sun-world in the symbolic sense,—what we call the supermind,—does not return, *na ca punar āvartate*. And this is also the phrase which forms the last aphorism of the Brahma Sutras. This has become a well-known and oft-quoted line to support the idea that there is no rebirth for one who has attained the Brahman. But neither in the Prashna Upanishad nor in the Chhandogya where the same phrase occurs there is any express statement about the rebirth though it can be so interpreted. Straightly and clearly the idea is expressed that when one reaches that world of Immortality, from there he returns not. Now from what has been stated regarding the ideal of the sages in the Upanishads, it can be easily gathered that the goal aimed at was not anything nearer to the line of Sri Aurobindo's approach to the Supermind, but it was the Knowledge of Brahman, the realisation of the Self, Atman. And they seek the support of the Hymns of the Rig Veda for their conclusions quite often. They nowhere seem to hint that the idea of bringing down the Truth-consciousness was there in the minds of the Vedic seers, nor do themselves state anything to indicate that they had thought even of a remote possi-

bility of such an endeavour, not to speak of the inevitability of such an advent of the Supermind.

Now an important distinction must be made when we speak of the spiritual achievement of the ancients. The sages of the Upanishads have tried to recover something of the Vedic wisdom and from their own experiences and intuitions, they have spoken of two lines of realisation of the Truth, and both are valid in their own ways. The one realisation is related mainly and solely to the Atman, the Self of selves or Brahman that is the All. In the Consciousness of the Atman, or Brahman, the soul may be gradually absorbed and merged without any relation whatever to the world or plane in which it lives and gets the realisation. In other words, this line of realisation is essentially one that is indifferent to or does not admit of being related to the Cosmic manifestation. Another line is that in which the soul's progress is related at every turn to the existence of the world-order in the Cosmos. Obviously, it is to this latter kind we refer when we speak of the achievement of the ancients. From this point of view, the ancient achievements, whether of the Vedic seers or Upanishadic sages, or the later Vedantic Yojin, or those who followed the successful path of devotion and love, or the path of the Karma Yoga, were all essentially for individual attainment; even when the realisation, whether it is God-realisation or Self-knowledge, was dynamic and could be easily related to the Cosmic manifestation, and may have, as a matter of course, influenced the en-

vironment of the experiencing soul either on the path of knowledge or devotion or any other line, it was chiefly meant for and related to the individual concerned, and not for anything else, even remotely resembling the ideal of Supermind for earth. For it was taken for granted that this world is meant to be given up, and it is *jada*, eternally damned, the field of incurable ignorance, naturally wedded to Evil, or it is a false appearance, Maya. All have sailed and even now those who profess the religions of different sects sail in the same boat. None has had this conception—the idea itself that it can be changed, and made the manifest dwelling place of the Divine. Now we have come to the closing part of the theme that there has been neither conception of anything similar to the Supramental ideal, any notable endeavour in the past for which there is textual evidence, nor even the feeble testimony of tradition that the Truth-Light can come down for earth.

Now about the term Supermind used by Sri Aurobindo: in the hierarchy of planes it is Mahas, the fourth term *vyāhṛti*, above the triple world of our being—matter, life and mind in the Ignorance. As a Truth-principle, it is called Vijnana, a term used in the Taittiriya Upanishad, and it has a definite connotation in the parlance of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and philosophy. Vijnana, ordinarily in classical Sanskrit, at any rate in the Buddhist and post-Buddhist Sanskrit literature and philosophical works, means Buddhi, intellect. Even when the term is used in the Taittiriya Upanishad pundits and scholars take it to denote only Buddhi. But the term Vijnana following the

Manomaya Purusha, mental being, in the ancient scripture connotes that which is subtler and higher than the mental. Sri Aurobindo's discerning eye has seen the distinction in sense attached to these terms, *Prajñāna*, *Vijnāna*, *Sanjñāna* and others, and he has used the Vijnana in the sense of supermind of his description, especially because it is above the mind, and the Manomaya in the Upanishad includes the Buddhi also, just as the English word mind includes intellect. Now let us have some idea of the Upanishad's mention of the Vijnana in the context. We know that it is a great dictum of the Upanishad that all this is Brahman, not merely in a general way, as the Chhandogya puts it, but in every detail, as the Svetasvetara Upanishad proclaims: "Thou art man and woman, boy and girl; old and worn thou walkest bent over a staff; thou art the blue bird and the green and the scarlet-eyed ...." But this refers obviously to the world that we see around us. But there are other principles of existence, other elements not visible to the outward senses and mind, other worlds behind and above this world of Matter which is not the Sole Reality that is Brahman. The Taittiriya Upanishad says, all Matter, *annam*, is Brahman, then subtler and higher is Life, *prāṇa*, that is Brahman; then Mind, *manas*, which is still higher and subtler is Brahman, and above it is *vijnāna* (the supermind) that is Brahman and last is Delight, *ānanda*, that is at last to be realised as Brahman. Now instead of making a general statement which is true and beneficial in so far as it goes that all whatever is, is Brahman, the Upanishad makes a broad

classification of the principles of Cosmic existence and calls upon the seeker to realise the Brahman in every part of the being, in all elements severally that make up the being, in the Universe or the individual and teaches the way of fulfilment. We can now see how this Upanishad gives a broad basis for the Yoga which does not stop with the radical or basic realisation of the Ideal, God, Brahman or Self, but proceeds to realise Him in every aspect of the World-being, and since He is the All, even while not manifest as such, he could manifest himself in the mind, in the life, in the body of matter, and need not stop with manifesting himself in the Soul of man.

One word more about the difference in conception of Vijnana between the Yogen of the Vedanta and ourselves. When they speak of the five sheaths, *kośa*, matter *anna*, life *prāṇa*, mind *manas*, *vijñāna* and *ānanda*, each successive sheath is concealed in and covered by the preceding one until one reaches the last *ānanda* which is not a sheath, though loosely termed so, but the Purusha himself, one gets more and more absorbed within, and gains in intensity and depths of the spiritual being which is the centre and inmost part of the being, the heart, the seat of the Divine being or Self. At the same time, one gets more and more narrow in the intense depths and endeavours to establish himself in the core of his being which is indeed laudable and indispensable for any serious and genuine Yoga not to talk of the Supramental. But if we grasp the spirit of the Upanishad and its elucidation by Sri Aurobindo, our conception and image of the

sheaths which are true and necessary indeed for inward development, give place to a larger vision of things developing a cosmic breadth of view in which are open vast vistas before us, the world of Matter, itself infinite in spatial extension,—note this is Brahman, the world of Life behind and above it making its presence and activity felt upon it, the world of Mind overtopping the world of Life informing it and, through it, now the living matter, and still above, far above, the world of Vijnana, the Supermind about which it is not necessary to say anything here.

The mental perception and thought-vision one gains in pondering over the statements of Sri Aurobindo on the planes and worlds of matter, life and mind, not to speak of the higher and still higher ranges over the mind—the overmind, the supermind are so overpowering that the ego-bound personality is humbled and dwindles into a nothingness lost in the Impersonality of a global infinitude, or in the infinite variety of the One in the manifold Existence, in the Immensity of Being itself. This, then, is the difference between our conception of the various elements, matter, life and mind etc. that make up the individual and that of the Vedantin's fivefold sheath of the being.

One more point, small but important, we promised to consider in the opening paragraphs. That is the question of Supermind *for the earth*. What exactly is meant by the expression 'for the earth' must be clearly grasped for a fuller appreciation of the supramental descent. We know

that the evolution of the supermind on earth is brought about by the descent of the supermind, something substantial of the splendour in its plenary home above. Then, when it so descends, it does come down in the earth-consciousness, and is to become part of it, the central and dominant part.

This is what we mean by the supermind for earth, and as I had occasion to say elsewhere, the Earth does not welcome and lodge the supermind in her dark and dense body of inert matter, *annam*, nor into her life, *prāṇa* in the vegetable kingdom, nor in her crude mind in the lower or higher animal, man. She receives it in her best developed part, in the most highly evolved element which is the aspiring soul in the human kind. Here too it is not that all individuals of the kind that are at first prepared and suited to receive, accept and hold the higher spiritual principle of supermind in its descent into the evolutionary earth-nature. The choice, therefore, falls upon that human vessel which is most ready and born for it, the being, in whom the flame of Aspiration mounts up from Earth to Heaven solely for the Divine descent to the exclusion of everything else. For it is he who can and does lay bare absolutely open without reserve all the elements of his being surrendered to the Will and Power of the descending Light of the Truth-Consciousness, that it may establish itself as the ruling Divine principle of human life on earth. From such a one, flow like light from the sun, the influence, the light and power of the now settled Supermind transmitted to those who in the heights

of their being are prepared or born competent to receive them. Well has it been said that the dawn breaks upon the peaks when the valleys are still dark in the night.

We have come to the end. What has been stated will go far to clear the doubts that may linger in the earnest mind about the past achievements and the present endeavour in the realm of the Spirit. The achievements of the ancients, especially of the Vedic mystics, are nothing short of marvels. But to say this is not the same as to admit that nothing more was left to be done by posterity. There are indeed certain types of men representing the forces of atavism at its worst who would and do go so far as to say that all that was to be discovered and taught is to be found in the Vedanta, Gita, the Upanishads and nothing new can be found, said or propounded that could be of substantial benefit to man in the field of the Spirit, Religion, Philosophy. But, then, theirs is the logic of Caliph Omar who, historians tell us, gave orders for destroying the famous Alexandria Library on this ground: "If the writings of the Greeks agree with the Book of God, they are superfluous, therefore useless and need not be preserved; if they disagree, they are pernicious and ought to be destroyed."

Therefore it is only for the seeker, for the expanding intelligence, not for the narrow mind that moves in the dark and trodden groove that hardly admits of a single ray of light passing into it from the vast world around, that this question as discussed here can be of some use and interest.

## II

# THE VAK OF THE VEDA AND THE THROB OF THE TANTRA

AMONG the stupendous achievements of the mystics of ancient India stands foremost the Theory of Creation by the Word. The creative Logos of the Greeks does certainly correspond to the *Vāk* (Lat. *Vox*, Sans. *Vac* to speak) that is the Creatrix of the World. But the Indian conception is distinguished by the Theory and the treatment it has received at the hands of great seers of the Vedic age, the sages and intuitive thinkers of the Upanishads in succession, the philosophers of the Darshanas, the Tantra Shastras and the Puranas. In the long line of sacred and general literature from the Vedas down to our times we find that they have made capital use of the theory of Vak and its practical importance was the one aim towards which all their efforts were directed. The theory of Vak which has permeated the religious literature of the land has influenced to a considerable extent the *belles lettres* of latter ages as exemplified in the utterances of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. While the former affirms Vak as Shakti, power, that cannot be alienated from the meaning, its

substance, in the opening verse of his Epic Poem, the latter, Bhavabhuti, makes a profound statement in his dictum that is laden with a world of ideas about the original power of Vak and its real nature on the one hand and on the other hand Vak as vehicle of thought at the disposal of the decent-minded. For he says that speech follows the meaning in the case of the *sādhus* of the world—and they are called *sādhus* who are of a good, well-bred kind with regard to veracity—in effect it comes to mean that at the best, men in the world give a correct expression to the thought in their minds. In contradistinction to this is the other statement that the meaning follows the word in the case of primeval Seers, the Rishis. The intention of the poet here is unmistakable and the idea about the real nature of Vak as transmitted from age to age from the Vedic times is revealed in the pregnant phrase—*vācam artho'nudhāvati*. The Vak of the Rishis is not a sound-symbol of a mental idea vocally expressed as is done by all developed human beings. What else could it be then? Vak, no doubt, is Voice, word or speech. But it is not the Voice or word depending on the mind to express an idea. It is a voice in a deeper sense of the term which is in its source a power of expression, a force which impels the being to respond to the stimuli which are a demand made on the being by the environment or by the subtle or occult and spiritual forces from the deeper layers or higher levels of being.

It is a voice that proceeds from the depths, or from the heights of one's being which is not established in mind,

but itself being an early and settled movement for expression is the support of the mind which, comparatively speaking, is a subordinate instrument of expression. Here we have to understand the distinction made by the ancients between the Voice which is the support of the mind and the voice which is speech. The word as vocal expression is sound-symbol of an idea in the mind and naturally has mind for its basis, source and support. In this light the poet's dictum that meaning follows the Rishi's Vak has to be understood; and indeed it is intelligible that the Voice proceeds from the heights or depths of the conscious substance in which the Rishi is stationed and carries with it the meaning to be realised when it finds its completion in the delivery of the utterance. This is how meaning follows the Word in the case of a *seer* and in the case of others word is chosen and adapted to convey the intended meaning.

Now let us enquire into the real character of the Vak that creates, the Vak which, in the words of a Vedic poet, became all these worlds, *vāgeva viśvā bhuvanāni jajñe*. We have clues found in the Rig Veda itself which we can follow with great advantage in our attempt to penetrate into the mysteries of the Word. The oft-quoted famous passage of Dirghatamas helps us a great deal to have an adequate idea of the theory of the Word as Mantra and of human speech as understood by the seers of the Rig Veda. For the seer-poet in stating that there are four steps by which the Word of the Mantra unveils itself has revealed a truth which has a large bearing on the source

of the Word itself, as being the abode of the Great Cosmic Powers, the Gods as mentioned in another verse of the same hymn. These two Riks (I. 164-39,45) announce in plain and unambiguous language as is rarely the wont of these ancient mystics, certain facts of mystic experience which we may reduce to categorical dicta for modern understanding.

1. There is the supernal Ether in the empyrean heights of Being called *paramam vyoma*.
2. It is the abiding place—imperishable and immutable—of the Riks, i.e. the Mantras.
3. All the Gods, the Cosmic Powers also reside there.
4. What can any one do with the Rik who does not know *That* (the Supreme Ether) which is the abode of the Riks as well as of the Gods? That is to say, the Rik has value only when one knows its source, the Supreme Ether.
5. There are four steps or planes, *padāni*, from which the Speech issues, the fourth step is the human speech that is the ordinary word while the other planes are hidden in the secrecy.<sup>1</sup>
6. The Word and the meaning of the Mantra, i.e. the Veda belongs to the higher planes.

<sup>1</sup> A draft of the author's translation of Sayana's informative comment on this Rik (I. 164-45) is included in the Appendix. Though done for a different purpose, the translation has been appended to this work as it is particularly relevant to the subject on hand.—M. P. P.

7. And the last and important statement is that the Veda is referred to by the Rig Vedic *Seers* themselves as the Word Eternal, *nityā vāk*, a phrase the Rishi applies to the Mantra in the urge for laudation to Agni, *nityayā vācā codasva* (VIII. 64.6).

We can now consider how the essential truths in the statements made above formed the basis of the Upanishads and later Scriptures in dealing with instructions on the character of the Eternal Word of which the Sound-symbol is OM. For it is the nearest representative approach in the mental and vocal expression to the inexpressible fountain-source of all original rhythms of the Supreme Ether. This Ether of the Sublime above is the native Home of the primordial sound-substance of which the Mantras are formations hidden in the higher planes and manifest in their descent to the last step which is the human speech. This Supernal *ākāśa* is the imperishable source and perpetual basis of sonorous rhythms that issue from the heights to form the planes and build the worlds and also to function by casting harmonic spells for their sustenance. It is this Vedic idea and spirit that bristles in the utterance of the Upanishad wherein the Rishi prays to Indra the Lord of Swar, the Divine Power of the Luminous Heaven, whose vibrations of rhythms proceed from that World of the luminous Gods, whose abode, as has been stated, is the self-same Ether, *paramam vyoma*. "He who is the Bull of the Vedas of the universal form, he who was born in the sacred rhythms from the Immortal —may Indra satisfy me through the intelligence, O God,

may I become a vessel of the Immortal. May my body be full of vision.”<sup>1</sup> This passage, it is evident, keeps close to the Vedic conception of the eternal Word—the Vedas, the rhythms, the Godhead, the Immortal that could be held in the earthy body of man, the body of the Rishi that has to become self-luminous, full of vision, and above all Indra, the Godhead of the Divine Mind as manifested, i.e. born from the sacred rhythms of the Immortal.

One more topic about the four steps of Vak requires elucidation. We can translate the term as planes answering to the steps, *padāni*, used in the Rik. The four steps are taken to be, first, the material plane, next, the plane of Life-force that penetrates, circumfuses and sustains it, itself remaining above in its station higher than that of the material existence; and the third from here is a plane in which the Mind-principle is dominant and is in relation to the plane of the Life-world, in the same way as the latter is to the world of Matter. If we take the first plane, the material world, as a gross existence, then the second is the subtle and the third is the causal. Giving birth to these three planes, there stands above these three the great Causal, *mahākāraṇa*, in which reside in an undifferentiated state all rhythms of sound to build the worlds and planes, all play of Light to direct the lines of rhythm which are real creators not only of objects of the world severally and in their totality but also manifestations of the Gods in the Cosmos.

<sup>1</sup> Portion of a Taittiriya passage translated by Sri Aurobindo

The fourfold division of the gross, the subtle, the causal and the Supreme Causal that transcends the three as envisaged here may correspond to similar divisions of other ways of classification that are suited to the practical lines adopted in the various systems of Yoga and their respective philosophies. Commenting on this Rik, Sayana mentions the names of the four steps of Vak using the terminology of the Tantrik Yoga. We can explain the significance of those four steps or states in the light of the fourfold division as envisaged above. The Tantriks while admitting the principle of the division, apply it for practical purposes dealing with the subject from a psycho-physical and psycho-spiritual point of view; naturally therefore, since the subtle centres play a vital part in their Yoga they locate the Vak of the states in the nervous system. They name it *parā*, *paśyanti*, *madhyamā* and *vaikhari*. The first and the supreme source—the primordial *Parā-Vāk* is beyond; it is unmanifest, but turned towards manifestation; it is the great Causal *mahā-kāraṇa*, and as such its centre is at the bottom of the spinal column that supports the nervous system. This bottom is *mūlādhāra*, the root-centre of the physical being. Next is the *paśyanti vāk*, the word that perceives, and this is the causal located in the navel centre; then is the *madhyamā vāk*, the middle, the Word in the intermediate subtle region between the navel and throat which last is the region for the express speech called *vaikhari vāk*.

These four states of what may be called the process of sound-formation may or may not have an exact corres-

pondence to the four steps mentioned by the seer in the Rig Veda or to the other lines of classification that is based upon the practical procedure, Yoga, adopted in the different systems. It is not of much importance to reconcile the corresponding divisions as that would cause confusion and minimise the value and importance of certain classifications in preference to others. But what is of great moment to us and is common to all the systems is the fact that the principle of fourfold division has bearing on the states of consciousness, wherein their vibrations are represented in their dynamic aspect by the vibrant word, the expressive sound. While the Tantrik Yoga locates these states in the centres, the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo which takes a Cosmic view of things would consider the four principles as referring not only to the four states of consciousness, but also to the corresponding fields of consciousness and call them the four planes of being. Necessarily then, the Waking consciousness, *jāgrat*, operates in the world of Matter, the Dream consciousness,—not the subconscious dream, but the superconscious Yogic dream, *svapna*,—in the field of the Life-world, and above, next to it, the Yogic Sleep consciousness, *susupti*, belongs to the third world from here, the world of the Luminous Divine Mind, the Swar. Above the third is the fourth, *turiya*, that transeends the lower three states of consciousness and planes of being. It is from there the effulgent Rays of the Gods, the Cosmic Powers of the Supreme One radiate and their rhythms are caught on their way from the Supreme Ether by the *seer*, one

who is endowed with the faculty of the revelatory vision or inspirational audience.

It is clear then, that these are all conscious and super-conscious states of which in the normal waking state we are not conscious. That we are not conscious is no proof that they are not conscious. It is too late in the day to question the correctness and veracity of utterances of the *seers* who have experienced these truths in the mystic field and bequeathed the same to their posterity. These states and planes are the steps by which the rhythms of the Creative Word, the *Vak*, descend to the level of the human speech which is called the *Mantra*, the word of inspiration that expresses in rhythm truths of intuitive vision or direct perception. It goes without saying that it does not apply to all human speech most of which is representative in sound-symbol of ideas in the mind. But it applies most eminently to the *Mantras* of the Vedic age when language was a living organism acting to the emotional pressure and nervous experience, forces of impulsion, inspirational incitement or revelatory visions. It also applies to some extent to genuine Poetry of all times—not all poetry, but Poetry of the kind in which the poet catches the rhythms in the deeper and subtler layers or on the higher altitudes in their less weakened intensity and vigour before they get much mixed and so thoroughly diluted in the ordinary human level and word-transaction and thought-formation. Indeed it is this fact that accounts for some poets giving utterance to truths of which they themselves were not conscious

at the time of their creation and delivery. On this subject of poetical creation and the rhythms, there are precious passages in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and no amount of writing upon it here can touch even a fringe of the matter as dealt with in the authentic utterances of the Master. Whatever the Vedic theory of the Word and the utterances of sages in the literature connected with it including the Brahmanas and the Upanishads be, those who are more familiar only with classical Sanskrit cannot feel quite at home in the earlier scriptures unless they make a special attempt to acquaint themselves with the obsolete words, archaic usage, the thought-content of the hymns in general and the recondite and complex and subtle conception of the graded and Vast existence beyond the material universe expressed in images, figures and symbols. But there is another class of scriptural literature, the Tantric, where the language is easy, the ideas are clearly laid, the substance of the whole matter that is dealt with is given out in a manner that directly goes home to any enquiring mind. Let us see what they state about the true character of the Word reduced to sound, *śabda*, and its utility in all human endeavour for success in life as well as for liberation from the bonds of ignorance leading to the final beatitude.

They start with the dictum that the word-sound has a power inherent in it, and that this power varies with the letter-sounds and a proper use of these word-sounds enables us to realise the truth in or behind the object it refers to. This theory of Tantriks is based upon their first axiom

that the Word or sound-creation precedes the creation of objects—Word-sound, *śabda*, first and *artha*, the meaning or object next—*artha-sṛṣṭeh pūrvam śabda-sṛṣṭih*. This *śabda* takes the place of the Vak of the Vedic scriptures. It is the first *śabda*, called *nāda* rhythmic sound that was the first creation, the primordial throb, *ādya spanda*, that proceeds to effect the formation of the universe and create the objects of the World. It is the ancient Vedic theory of Creation, Vak, the Voice of the Bull that roars, *vṛṣabho roravīti*, of the Supreme Truth, the Godhead that is translated into the language of the Tantra, as the supreme and primal throb, the vibrant move of an infinitesimal portion of the Infinite Absolute that measures out and forms and manifests all the worlds and this world and its objects. It is the same word, the sound, the rhythm, *nāda*, that is at work in the formation of tiny things as of colossal objects. The Tantriks discovered and promulgated a series of sound-symbols selected from articulate speech as representing the rhythms that constitute the formations not only of material objects, but of others which are subtle and are of the subtler planes of the Cosmos. Thus the original Word, the Vak, the Voice of Creation which suggests the Eternal syllable of the Veda, OM—or rather AUM—develops in the course of its manifestation into the seed-sounds of the Tantriks, *bija-akṣaras*, which are charged with the principles of things; and in reality they have their own forms made of rhythms which stand behind the revelations and inspirations that greet the developed and higher faculties

even as they compel and build the forms in well-ordered vibrations and move into great Cosmic measures.

The development of this seed-sound theory into very minute details by the Tantriks, with an eye to its utility in their explorations in the occult spheres, has had a far reaching consequence on the practice of *mantra sādhana* for dealing with men and things, the elemental forces, and beings of the supraphysical worlds. For the letters, singly and in conjunction with others, represent in their rhythms not only objects; they express the colours and other qualities, actions of different kinds including attraction and repulsion as well as creation and destruction. It must be borne in mind that there are two sides in the effectual process of these seed-sounds for their respective purpose. One is the radical and psychological aspect which carries with it the spirit and thought-vibrations natural to them and the other is the mechanical side that arouses the vibrations of the material energy that is generated in the effort to vocalise and deliver it for the execution of its natural function. This latter aspect can be easier appreciated if we remember what is a commonplace of modern Science—that the vibration of sound has the potency, the effectual power to create or destroy forms; but the other, the psychological and spiritual aspect of the sound-vibration requires a closer consideration, for it is not the sound of a drum or the voice of a brute, but the vocal expression of a self-conscious human being. And if we but go a little deeper behind the spoken word into the undelivered word which resides in the mind and

consider its real character as related to the desires, passions, sensations and emotions on one side and the thoughts and ideas that belong to the higher mind or the mind proper on the other side, we discover that daily and hourly we produce by the word-sound within us thought-forms and thought-vibrations which result in corresponding vital and physical vibrations, act upon ourselves and others ending in the indirect creation of action and of formation in the physical world. When we learn to appreciate the relation of sound to speech, and also the action of thought-vibrations which are also sound in subtle state that incessantly emanate from us, act and react on others and ourselves in the manner stated above, we would find it easier to understand intelligently the power of the seed-sounds, *bijākṣaras* which represent as approximately as possible in terms of human speech-sound the natural sound-vibrations and orderly rhythms that have built the forms and bodies of the created objects as well as of creative forces to which they apply because of being their natural names in their causal state. The Tantras have discovered their utility in the occult lines of thought by fixing the seed-sound chosen for a particular object in some locus or centre in the nervous system and concentrating on it in a stream of uninterrupted flow of the same i.e. similar vibrations that lead to the realisation of the true meaning in its causal state, or its position and purpose in the scheme of the Cosmic order. Or when this method involves a strenuous yogic effort too much for an ordinary seeker of

occult truths, there is another comparatively easier, but none the less effective method that is generally recommended. It is the repetition backed by attention and interest, of the letter or letters to produce the subtle vibrations on the consciousness and thus to prepare it to receive the truth or truths beyond the mind which are evoked by the harmonic rhythms of the letter-sound held in mind through repetition and which are the nearest approaches to the natural rhythms of those truths.

So far we have seen how the mystics of Tantra treat the letters and their sound-rhythms and their real character and value for ends which pertain to life in this world and other worlds. But they do not stop with the occult truths however interesting and useful they may be, they proceed to the Beyond, the Transcendental, for the ultimate goal, the final Beatitude, the Light Eternal which is also the Vedic Ideal. Actuated by a synthetic spirit to include every element of truth that matters and concerns the individual and the universal, *pindānda* and *brahmānda*, to use their terminology, they proceed from the subtle meaningful sound-vibrations to their causal and to the great Causal of all causals which issue from the Original Throb which in its native form is Light. That is how they call the Eternal Word of the Veda, AUM as the Radical Light, also as the generator of all seed-sounds *sarva-bija-utpādaka*, as the source tree of all branches *sākhādiḥ*, and as the constant, steady and inexahustible and immutable *dhrūva*, *aviyaya* and *akṣara*.

Here again the Tantra accepts the theory of Vak in principle, but develops it in its characteristic way for practical purposes.

A word about the Vedic method of using the Vak for purposes of Sadhana is necessary to distinguish it from the Tantric method since we started with the Vedic Vak and entered into some details about the Tantric theory of seed-sounds. It may be asked: how did the Vedic sages apply their theory of Vak to the life of Sadhana, to build the inner life? It is difficult to enter into this question in detail here. But we can safely, without hesitation, say what can be easily gathered from the hymns of the Rig Veda. One outstanding fact in their manner of approach to the Godhead is that while they were tireless in their effort to commune with the Cosmic Powers, the Gods, and aimed at the Highest, they had for their article of faith the one Cosmic Power of the Godhead nearest to the Earth-plane; in fact, the presiding King of this world is Agni, the Divine Flame. And Agni has many functions, as the heat of the conscious Force that effects the formation of things in the World of matter and develops his functions in man—for the Gods function in the cosmos as natural powers, and as psychological and spiritual powers in man; and as the human faculties develop in the self-conscious being, he manifests himself as the flame of aspiration that burns out the smoke of desires and passions and impurities, arriving at his fuller manifestation as the Divine Will. In the Vedic scheme the first function of Agni is to voice

forth the aspirational call of man for the acceptance by the higher Gods of his being in all the parts of his being, so that whatever in man belongs to the Cosmic Powers will go to their rightful owners, the Powers of the Godhead, and man may be delivered to his rightful place among the Gods and abide in the Home of Truth.

But that is a higher function of Agni when the higher faculties of the human being are so developed as to enable man for the divine effort of self-exceeding and mounting the higher steps of the ladder of cosmic existence. Even before that, Agni's function begins as the voice in man, *agnir vāg bhūtah*. It is this aspect of Agni that the Vedic sages were initially impressed with and used prayers to evoke him so that he may awake and take up the function of calling the higher Powers. Vak therefore as hymns, prayers addressed to Agni first and to other Gods afterwards was the main instrument of their spiritual effort. Whatever their personal effort, it was all directed towards the help of the ruling Powers and was subordinate to and aid to self-giving, self-offering of which Vak as prayer was the motor force, rather than concentration and meditation on sacred syllables as is the case with Yogins of later ages including the Tantric way. And the inspired nature of the Vedic Vak tended to attach greater importance to and enhance the value of the sacred utterance and the result was tangible and comparatively speaking, unfailing as can be seen from a close study of most of the hymns addressed to the Gods in Rig Veda. It is noteworthy that the Seer-poets

of the Veda themselves make mention of the efficacy of Vak, the Mantra, quite often expressing their gratitude to the responsive Gods whom they laud with a happy confidence that they are watchful and hear and respond to them in the hour of their need. The potency of the Vedic Vak as prayer lay in the fact that it was an externalised vibrant sound, a perfect reproduction in resonant rhythms of thought-vibrations charged with feelings from the depths of the Seer-poet and others who used it. Vak was the chief means used by the Rishis to awaken the Great God of the Earth, Agni, seated in the heart of man. It is not that the Rishis did not employ means other than prayer,—concentration, *tapasyā* etc. They were great *tapaswins* and Yogins with a fund of occult Knowledge and vision of spiritual truths all of which were gifts of the awakened Agni guiding the Rishi in his onward journey towards the Home of the Supernal Light. Agni, then, is Vak, the power of expression, the voice of Call, in the physical plane; in his subtler aspect at the back of the voice he is the psychic fire whose flame throws up the force of Aspiration in the march towards the Godhead; radically he is the Godhead himself, his Will secret in the heart of things and of man.

Now we close: we began with Vak as the creatrix, the throb in the Infinite calm that sets into motion the Creation, the manifestation of the worlds in Cosmic measures. It is the primal root-sound represented by OM, of all seed-sounds which are the basic rhythms for the formation of all things in Creation. The word and sound precede the

meaning and objects in creation. The four steps of the words are Cosmic steps in their descent into Manifested Existence. In the Cosmic view these steps are the planes —the great Causal that is above, followed by the causal, the subtle, and the last, gross physical plane. It is the relation of thought-vibration and sound-vibration to speech—subtle or openly expressed—that explains the dynamic character of *mantras* for formation, dissolution and sustenance. Such is the perception of the mystics of ancient India; such the profound conception behind their utterance about the value and potency of Vak; and such also is the grandeur at once subtle and recondite, yet yielding to utility not only for purposes of life here,—though this is subordinated to higher and pure spiritual aims,—but for the highest aim of man endowed with Vak, for his self-exceeding effort to arrive at the most sublime, the Immortal Light which is the Eternal home of all lights and all rhythms, all Gods and all measures of this Cosmic Manifestation.

### III

## THE INITIATE AND THE MYSTIC FIRE

“Is it your view that the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is the same as that of the Rishis of the Rig Veda? Is it your object to establish that the Integral Yoga is based upon the essential truths embedded in the Mantras of the Rik Samhita?” Thus queried an Indologist, a well-known Vedic scholar and linguist. I sent a suitable brief reply orally through a friend, adding at the same time that he would find the position of the Vedic sages made clear in the Commentary *Siddhāñjana* that was under preparation and that Sri Aurobindo’s writings on his Yoga are well-known and nothing is left in doubt. The matter ended there for the time being, so far as the well-meaning questioner was concerned; but it awakened in me a profound feeling for the search of the actual method adopted by the Vedic Rishis that could be gathered from the hymns themselves. It is not that I was unaware of what all the Master has said about the Vedic Mystics and their Doctrine through his translations and commentaries and other essays on the Vedic lore and wisdom. That is indeed a vast subject. The question that occupied me fully in this regard was apparently narrow, precise and limited but consequential and cardinal in importance. The question

is simply this: what exactly is the path or key for the Initiation of the mystics? We have, as a matter of course, enough materials in the hymnal texts that give us an idea of the achievements of the seers who were Initiates. But how did they start? What was the key that the novitiate was provided with to open the Gates of the Mystic Chamber? Once the Initiate passes the threshold and enters into the secret Realm, he communes with the Powers that transcend the physical senses or through them advances towards the Godhead. But all this and much more are the wonders that we can glimpse from these utterances of the seers; but how did they gain admission into the Secrecy, what was the process or the mystic formula, if any? That is the question. We can indeed find an authentic answer not from one source, but from many passages scattered over the voluminous writings of Sri Aurobindo. But we have to sift and choose from a number of references to the subject from his works and commentaries, if we wish to have a precise answer to the precise question raised above.

Again we have to be cautious in our attempt to probe into the secret of the mystic method of initiating and getting initiated into the profundities of the hidden truths of the Godhead, or of the occult presence of the Conscious Powers and their active participation in the functioning of the Cosmic Spirit in the Universe. Removed as we are from the Age of the Mystics for a space of scores of centuries. we must not overstep reasonable limits in our enthusiasm to incarnate into the terms of

modern mentality the words of Wisdom that gleam through the figures, images and symbols employed in the verses of these litanies of a hoary past. However conscientious we may be, it is not an easy task to understand and appreciate the full significance of the utterances of the ancient seers without being influenced by the ideas of spirituality we have imbibed from the spirit of our age through the sacred writings of the saints and sages of subsequent times as well as through the post-Vedic scriptures beginning with the Upanishads and the Gita down to the authentic teachings of God-men of our own age in living memory. It is common knowledge that this tendency to read modern ideas into ancient texts, not always consciously, is more pronounced in the spirit of research scholarship to some extent and also in the reverential sentiment actuating pious minds to plumb into the depths of ancient wisdom. At the same time, it must be admitted that the various lines of Godward approach with which we are familiar could all be traced to their source in the Hymns of the Rig Veda.

But how does it help an answer to the question we have posed for ourselves? Indeed, when we come across Riks which extol truth, truth in speech, and action and truthful move in every way of life, we can affirm without stretching the meaning of the words beyond legitimate bounds that regard for truth and adherence to truth as the governing principle of all action, all life, was among the cardinal teachings of the Vedic seers; but we cannot say with definiteness that that is the same as the Yoga of Works, the

disinterested action of the Bhagavad Gita, though perhaps its prototype is there. Similarly when we find verses sung in adoration of the Almighty, of the indescribable One, the Supreme Godhead behind and in all and each of the Gods, we can assuredly say, here is the prototype of what we call the line of Knowledge i.e. Jnana as explicitly affirmed in the Upanishads and the Gita, but we cannot call it the Jnana Yoga popularised in all its details and form, in theory and practice as advocated in our age through the recognised scriptures and canonised utterances of saints and sages of later generations. As for the line of Devotion, Bhakti, a larger proportion of the hymns of the Rik Samhita stands witness to the wisdom of the Rishi in his intimate appeal to the Godhead, to the God of his adoration. And of all the Gods of the Vedic pantheon with their Cosmic functions and distinct aspects of the Supreme One, *tad ekam*, it is Agni who occupies a prominent position nearest to man, first to be awakened in the mortal, whose intimacy with the Rishi is so pronounced and repeatedly brought to light in the hymns addressed to him. The mystic communion with the Godhead as represented by Agni, the Mystic Fire, is so much in evidence in the Mantras of Agni, that if we study and ponder over them we cannot fail to recognise the fact that the Rishi was not only face to face with him, but was at least in touch with the secret treasures of the mystic realm revealed to him by the Agni himself. If we go one step further it is not difficult to discover the means by which he became first acquainted with this first Immortal born in

the mortal. For when the Rishi sings: 'I have uttered the Word, may he manifest himself', or lines conveying sense to this effect, it is clear that the word he employed to wake up Agni was the key to unlock the gates of the Divine treasure; for that is the secret truth, the unfailing Guide, the Seer-Will lodged in the heart of men and things, stimulated to activity by a burning passion, by a rising flame of aspiration from the human heart. But, what is this Word? How is it endowed with such a potency to bring about the manifestation of the Immortal in man? Certainly we may say that the word means a fervent prayer to invoke the presence; and there is strong reason to support this view; for prayer can be denoted by the term *word* and prayer as the chief means of approach to the Godhead is powerful and moving as it contains the element of aspiration of the human heart and a fixed will to achieve the end. If this were all that is meant then we can plainly and straightly conclude that the Vedic seers used prayer as the main means in their adventure into the occult and spiritual realms. That prayer has been resorted to in all climes and ages to win the Grace of the Deity is unexceptionable; and that the term *word* can refer to prayer also is reasonable. But it is doubtful if that sums up all that is meant by the *word* whenever it occurs in the hymns and without doubt the *word* means much more than a mere word or even a prayer in many places such as,

*ādid vasūni pra vāva cāsmai,*

“to such a one he (Agni) gives word of the riches,”  
 or, *vîlu cid drlhâ pitaro na ukthairadrim rujannangiraso ravena,*

“Our fathers by their words broke the strong and stubborn places, the Angiras seers shattered the mountain rock with their cry...”

Instances are numerous in the hymns where the *word* signifies a secret utterance, a sacred formula, akin to what we call in modern language a code-word by which the God who is adored, the Agni who is awakened and wakeful recognises the adorer and looks into his needs. Such a potent word—say a *mantra*—is originally generated by the concentrated power of consciousness of the mystic who initiates the would-be-initiate with the sacred formula into the secrecy of the Powers of the Godhead. The word is effective for initiation because it is laden with the condensed energy of Conscious force emanating from the Initiator in the transmission of the influence to the Initiate. We may go further and affirm that the word was quite often instantly effective and so felt by the Initiate that it entered into the conscious stuff of his being and not as it would be generally in our age a sheer sound of mechanical speech with all its regular articulation. To explain it in modern language, we may say further that there was a realisation of the power of sound over matter as well as mind. It must be borne in mind that this sound is not a sheer mechanical effect of friction of the vocal

cords in the attempt of thought to find its expression in the word. It is, indeed, sound, but sound that carries conscious vibrations of the thought to complete its movement in the evolution of the word. For although a master initiate could give the initiation with thought alone, generally and especially in the Vedic tradition the culmination of a thought-movement in the word-expression was considered important and indispensable. For without the word thought-movement is incomplete, since it is nothing but word in a subtle, not full-blown, condition. And word without thought, it goes without saying, is meaningless, for it means word mechanically uttered, separated from the thought which it is intended to express. The essential factor in the effective use of the *word* is that it is inextricably united with the thought-vibrations that are the main product of the Tapas-force of the Rishi, the Mystic. The *word* was thus a conscious power; if on the one hand it brought the Initiate the initial awakening into the presence of Agni, it did, on the other hand, prove a live force to call on Agni to come to the forefront and take charge of the Initiate's life-work and guide him to the destination. It was a force that was used to evoke the powers of intuition and inspiration, to develop the faculties of truth-audition and truth-perception, and thereby to formulate effective forms of prayer, the *mantra*, to achieve definite ends in the inner as well as the outer life of the Initiate. Such is the character and purpose of the potent Word that fell from the Mystic for the initiation of the Initiate.

Since the Word of initiation is a potent sound churned out by the Tapas—self-gathered conscious power of the Rishi, it continues to live and have a distinct life of its own in the Initiate who always relies on and refers to it for any of the purposes as already mentioned, when the need arises.

What was the actual word of initiation used by the mystics cannot be affirmed with certitude as the choice always depends upon the need and temperament of the Initiate. It may have been any form of the Eternal Word, *nityā vāk*, as mentioned by the Seer Virupa, by which term the Vedic Word, the Word issued from *tapas-śakti* is meant. But we may assume on the strength of other Vedic texts and the Upanishads as well as on the hoary tradition that A U M represented the name of the Sole and Supreme Truth and was superbly fitted for the mystic initiation. Here also, it is the actual initiation and the capacity to transmit that is the essence of the matter. But we may note in passing that tradition has preserved the manner of initiation; in spite of the encrustation of heavy forms or rites it points to the secret of initiation. For the Acharya who accepts the disciple takes him alone and they keep themselves aloof from the view of others by closing themselves under a cloth spread over them and he utters the Mantra which the novitiate repeats following the teacher, and later utters the Mantra along with the teacher keeping his voice and tone in close union with the teacher's. Here lies the essential of the *dīkṣā*, initiation; for later on, when the disciple takes to the *name*,

the Mantra, it is the voice of initiation that dominates the being of the disciple in the act of his use of the Mantra for meditation, prayer or adoration of the Ideal for which he has consecrated his life.

The initiation into the mystic truths was always understood to be a guarded secret and when the initiation takes effect in the Initiate even the Gods come down to greet the new child born in him. We have it explicitly stated in a hymn in the Atharva text (11.5.3.) that the Acharya initiating the disciple takes him into his womb and bears him for three nights in his belly and when he is new-born the gods come down together to behold him. This shows beyond a shadow of doubt that the mystic initiation is a self-effectuating process introduced into the system of the disciple who keeps himself under the care of the adept until the new birth, the spiritual birth of the Initiate becomes a settled fact. This spiritual birth is not the end but the beginning; it is the epiphany of the Immortal in the mortal, the Seer-Will coming to the front from behind the veil of darkness, the Flaming Force that burns to ashes all that obscures and obstructs and brightens the passage of the Gods for the human march.

Once Agni is kindled, born and tended to grow into a firm and fixed, divine and articulate organ occupying the central part of the Initiate, he is always recognised as the new-born and distinct child of the Grace Divine and whatever activity such a mortal is called upon to undertake he could and has to unburden himself to the Divine Guest to whom he can deliver himself with all his possessions.

Thus Agni is not an imaginary figure, or metaphysical concept, but a living presence, the Divine Guide quite recognisable as distinct from all that is human in the Rishi. He is face to face with him, quite intimate, beloved like a father, a son, a friend and nearest of relatives to whom he can always look up for advice and guidance. When we read hymn after hymn addressed to Agni we can always find an unusual striking intimacy of the Rishi with this mystic Fire. We cannot afford to dispose of such hymns as fanciful prayers and pious hopes of credulous men of those ages in the beginnings of time, unless we choose to be perverse or unreasonable. When the Rishi says, "Agni, I deem my father, Agni my kinsman, him I deem my brother and friend for ever", he is not eulogising Agni as conceived in his mind, nor the elemental fire, nor the sanctified fire for sacrificial purposes, but speaks with fervour the Truth of his life that Agni, the purifying flame of the Divine Seer-Will has entered into his life and occupies a central position in his being and that he is so much loved and adored that the Rishi cannot think of any one else nearer to him than Agni. Thus sings Trita Aptya in the tenth Book of the Rik Samhita. Numerous are the Riks that throw light on the Rishi's intimacy with Agni, an intimacy which emboldens him to address the God in terms of endearment and love, of reverence and adoration, cherishing him in all possible relationship as occasion demands. The Rishis are of one voice in extolling the birth of Agni, they adopt the same formula in cele-

brating it with a happy confidence in the marvels that he reveals beginning with and subsequent to his birth. Let us choose from the *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* a specimen Rik or two at random that reveal the wondrous birth and still more wondrous effect of his advent on the forces that block the way and are opposed to godly life and light of truth. Jamadagni Bhargava sings: "As soon as he was born Fire measured out the shape of the sacrifice and became the leader who goes in front of the Gods. In the speech of this priest of the call which points out by its direction the Truth, may the Gods partake of the oblation made *swāhā*." (X.III.II) Note that the sacrifice mentioned here is the inner one which is a live force that proceeds upwards to the regions of the Light and Truth and that it is Agni who determines its course in accordance with the need of the Rishi. And when the passage is made clear the Gods come to accept the offering in response to the Call of which Agni himself is the priest.

In another verse of the same hymn we find that by the good offices of Agni the Divine Doors open and are easy of approach to the Gods. "Widely expanding may they spring apart making themselves beautiful for us as wives for their lords; O divine doors, vast and all-pervading, be easy of approach to the Gods." (X.III.5)

In another place, Agni is plainly addressed as the builder of the levels (i.e. planes). "All the manifold magic of the lords of magic they have combined in Thee, O all-ruler, O builder of the levels."

The potency of the Word, the secret Name, or the

sacrificial Name, *yajñiyam nāma*, is mentioned a number of times in the hymns. We have already stated that the Rishis valued the Word as a treasure and used it always with effect because of the conscious life that made for its potency. In Rishi Purucchepa's chant (I.127.7.), we find a similar reference to the Word's marvel. When the Bhrigus "have made obeisance and spoken to him (Agni) the Word, when they have churned him out by their worship, the Fire becomes Master of the riches."

The Rishi's trust in the efficacy of the Word, the happy confidence that is manifest in his Call on Agni are often simple, straight, sincere and strike a note of reverential intimacy which leaves its impress on the ardent lover and devotee of the mystic lore. When Gritsamada sings, "O Messenger, O youngest Power, come at our *word* for him who aspires to thee and craves for thy safeguard; arrive, O priest of the Call, strong for sacrifice" (II.6.6.), is it possible not to be moved by the faith-laden words of inspiration that steal into us with a stir in the core of our being? And yet this Agni who is so close to us and accessible to devout hearts is not different from the Sun of Truth. For in the last resort, the Rishi realises him as the force of the Sun of Truth. "I serve the Vast Fire, his bright and worshipped force of the Sun in heaven". (X.7.3)

Here we stop for the present and close this short Paper on the character and process of initiation and the advent of the Mystic Fire. And this is the substance of what we have stated so far—that the initiation starts with the

Word churned out of the tapas-force generally transmitted by an adept to the Initiate or possibly by the Initiate himself discovering the Word of Truth by his Tapasya, or by the favour and help of the Divine Powers in response to his intense call and fervent prayer. It is the Word that brings the initial awakening of the soul to the awareness of a higher Power, a deeper presence within him. And when by the Word, by the Name, the Fire within is kindled and the birth of the Divine, the Immortal element becomes settled, the Initiate gradually hands over the charge of his self-discipline to the Mystic Fire who determines the road and steps to be traversed and carries him safe through openings to the radiant realms of Truth-Force, Truth-Consciousness and Truth-Light. He builds the planes of his being, opens the closed centres that are linked to the Cosmic planes, confers on him Truth-vision and Truth-audition, and whatever means is necessary He grants him, Knowledge, power or concentration and through all this He reaches him to the immortal Life, the undying Light, to the Sun-World which is the plenary Home of Truth.

IV

SRI AUROBINDO  
AND  
THE KENA UPANISHAD\*

THE Ishopanishad with Translation and Commentary appeared serially in the *Arya* and was later revised and enlarged for publication years ago. It has now run to several editions, while the Kenopanishad which also with Translation and Commentary followed the Ishopanishad serially (June 1915-July 1916) in the same Philosophical Review is now for the first time published after the passing away of the Master. This Upanishad second in order, not chronological, but in the traditional list of the Major Upanishads, belongs to the Talavakara Brahmana (*talavakāra* means musician), otherwise known as Jaiminiya Brahmana of the Sama Vedins and is the ninth chapter of that Book as stated by Shankara in the introduction to his Commentary on this Upanishad. When we find the first word of this Upanishad to be its title, we are reminded of the Vedic tradition (current even today) of referring to a Rig Vedic Sukta by mentioning the opening word of the text, such as 'agnim īle'

\* Review

hymn. This way of mentioning a hymn or a text is Veda-old, avoids an otherwise ponderous and descriptive title, briefly and unmistakably facilitates reference, and thus serves the purpose. And this method Sri Aurobindo adopted in the olden days in naming some of his letters, such as the 'Piercing of the veil'.

It is necessary, at the outset, to state in brief the salient features of the Master's characteristic approach to the study of the Upanishads. It is a general notion in the West that has gained currency in India among the educated moderns, that the Upanishads are the metaphysical speculations of certain bold thinkers who turned away from the Vedic creed of rituals and Nature-worship and arrived at philosophical conclusions about the Whence of Creation and the goal of life through arduous thinkings in their solitary forest abodes. This modern view is a gratuitous conjecture of an alien temperament and is, indeed, foreign to the spirit and tenor of these sacred texts and opposed to the ages-old tradition and internal evidence of these Books of Wisdom. It is an erroneous notion that these Scriptures are the results of revolt, rebel children of the parent religion of a semi-civilised past. They are not the flowers of Reason, or products of speculative labour which, denuded of the euphemistic robe, are in a straight-forward plain language the bold conjectures of the fantastic or the fabrications of the introvert—ideas that have no relation whatever to facts that can be observed, of truths that can be verified.

The sages of the Upanishads have certainly drawn their inspiration and succour from the fountain springs of the Vedas while engaged in developing their self-culture for the realisation of the ultimate Truth, for conforming their lives to the laws of the Spirit, for the attainment of Brahmanhood here while living on Earth. The findings of their explorations in the realm of the Spirit and in the fields of the inner life—the occult and the spiritual gains—are often implicitly, yet in authentic tones expressed in a language that is more intelligible to the mentality of our age and fairly far removed from that of the hymns of the Rig Veda. But they are, in the words of the Master, “the creation of a revelatory and intuitive mind and its illumined experience.” “Nor are they a revolutionary departure from the Vedic mind and its temperament and fundamental ideas, but a continuation and development and to a certain extent an enlarging transformation in the sense of bringing out into open expression all that was held covered in the symbolic Vedic speech as a mystery and a secret.”

This background settled, the Upanishads reveal themselves as vehicles of illumination to the seeker who had, broadly speaking, a processed understanding of the general spirit of the Vedic and Vedantic sages and even some personal experience of the truths which are the bases of their structure. Hence they are appropriately styled ‘Manuals of Sadhana’ in which the ideas are implicit, rarely explicit. The reasoning that supports the conclusive statements is suggested by the expressions employed

and not expressly communicated to the reasoning mind. The seeker, the hearer, was expected to proceed from Knowledge to Knowledge, verifying by experience and confirming his intuitions or thought-visions of the truths and not treating his ideas to the light of the logical reason and submitting to intellectual judgment.

This Commentary on the Kena Upanishad, then, takes up the ideas, elucidates them in their completeness, draws attention to the suggestions and thus brings to light the reasoning that is always implicit. The subject matter of the Upanishad, as indeed of the Upanishads in general, is Brahma Vidya, the Knowledge of Brahman. But they vary in their standpoints, start from different positions, proceed along the lines chosen to lead to the object of their seeking: the winning of the Immortal state, the arrival at the undying Light, the attainment of the supreme purpose of Life, the Eternal. But this text, unlike the Isha Upanishad which concerns itself with the whole problem of world and life and knowledge and works and all the fundamental problems of Existence, confines itself to a restricted question, a limited and narrow but precise enquiry, not straying outside the limits of the problem it has set before itself. The problem of the world-existence is not taken into consideration at all; the material world and the physical life are taken for granted; and it straightly puts the questions: what is the mental life that uses the senses? what are these mental instruments? are they the supreme and final power, the last witnesses or is there anything

superior to them and more real and abiding that directs the activities of the eye and ear and speech and life-breath and mind itself? The Upanishad gives the answer in the affirmative. We must note here that this Upanishad like other earlier texts keeps close to the Vedic roots, reflects the ancient psychological system of the Vedic sages and "preserves what may be called their spiritual pragmatism." This is quite apparent in the very opening sentence: '*kena iṣitam*, by whom missioned?' '*kena yuktah*, by whom yoked?' The Upanishad proceeds to expound the relation of the mind-consciousness to the Brahman Consciousness by which, it says, the mind thinks, the eye sees, the ear hears, the voice speaks, the life-breath breathes, but which none of these can reach or touch. Thus it indicates and describes what cannot be expressed or actually described by the mind. It affirms and indicates that Brahman is the absolute of all our relatives from which all relatives derive their values and thus in a way it is knowable, and yet not utterly knowable, for it is at the same time the Absolute Beyond which is utterly unknowable.

The Upanishad resolves the seeming contradictions in the two statements that it is knowable and unknowable by the affirmation that it is a vaster and profounder existence behind our surface selves, and is the puissant Consciousness of which mind, life, sense and speech are only inferior modes, imperfect figures and external instruments. The Commentary draws attention to the significance of the words employed in the text, brings to the

forefront the subtle suggestions, elaborates the reasonings implied in the successive phrases and arrives at the established conclusions of the profound yogic psychology —call it para-psychology—of this Upanishad. And what we normally think as ourselves, mind, life, sense, speech, in short, the psychology of a mind that is involved in the brain is shown to be the outer fringe of man's existence which consists in the eidolon of matter along with the nervous energy and its image reproduced in the mind-stuff. In the manner that is distinctively his, Sri Aurobindo places before the reader here the fact of spiritual experience that we can always enter into relation with Brahman through these faculties—mind, sense, speech etc. by tracing them to their source, as these are the outer instruments of the respective aspects of the profound Reality, Brahman, that is behind and directs the mind, sense, speech etc. as their original truth, source and support. An instance can be given here to exemplify this fact, and the rest left to the reader to find by delving into the pages of the book. In giving a rational explanation of the phrases about Brahman as the 'Word behind the speech' and as 'That which remains unexpressed by the word, that by which the word is expressed,' the Master looks at the question from two poles, discusses it threadbare and concludes: 'Thus we see the theory of Creation by the Word which is the absolute expression of the Truth, and the theory of the material creation by sound-vibration in the ether correspond and are two logical poles of the same idea' (P. 39).

It is to be noted that the Upanishad starts with a negative statement, 'Not this which men follow after here', in order to direct the seeker to aim at the discovery of the vaster Truth of which the ordinary human existence is a trifle, a frail figure, not unreal but incomplete.

Thus in the first two of the four sections of the Upanishad, we find that its instruction rests basically on the affirmation of three states of Existence, the first being the human, our mortal; the second, the Brahman-Consciousness which is the absolute of our relatives, yet knowable in a way as related to all this duality as its Lord and the third, the utter Unknowable Beyond. And because of this relation to what we are, it is possible to realise something of Him, of the supreme Truth of our existence and the scripture closes the second section with the emphatic statement "If here one comes to that Knowledge, then one truly is; if here one comes not to the Knowledge, then great is the perdition. The Wise distinguish That in all kinds of becomings and they pass forward from this world and become Immortal" (II. 5). The same idea of the necessity of qualifying for Immortality and possessing the Brahmic Knowledge in life here is to be found in some of the other authentic Upanishads e.g. Brihadaranyaka (IV. 4. 14), Katha (VI. 4).

In the third section the Upanishad proceeds to point out the means of piercing the veil to enable the subject-consciousness of man to enter into the Master-consciousness of the Lord. This it does by a striking analogue. It is the famous parable of the Gods—Agni, Vayu and

Indra—who approach the Yaksha, the Daemon, but fail to impress their prowess on him and return bewildered. While Indra, the highest of the Gods, the Lord of the luminous mind and Light approaches, the Yaksha disappears and there in the empyrean heights of the void ether, *ākāśa*, appears Uma, Daughter of the Snowy Summits who reveals to him the truth of the Yaksha that it is Brahman. To appreciate the significance of this story it is necessary to have an adequate idea of the Gods of the Upanishads who are the same as those of the Rig Veda except in one important respect. The Vedic Gods are the Cosmic Powers of the One, and are conscious of their original source and true identity and the all-powerful One, the Supreme Lord, Brahman. Also in their lesser and lower movements they manifest themselves in man in the form of human faculties and assume the mould of cosmic operations in Nature. The Gods of the Upanishads are not conscious of their source, their identity with Brahman, but they retain the lesser aspect and are indeed psychological powers including the human faculty of speech, sense, mind and the rest. They are as in the Rig Veda, the Powers that 'affirm the Good, the Light, the Joy and Beauty, the Strength and Mastery.' And when they win the eternal battle with the adverse forces, the Asuras that deny, they think that theirs is the victory won and do not realise that it is the Brahman that stands behind them and conquers for them. Hence the challenge of the Daemon, the Yaksha, hurled at the three main Powers, the Gods of the triple world. Agni is the heat

and flame of the conscious force in Matter that builds the universe and makes life and mind possible on the plane of the material world in which he is the greatest Deity, 'the impeller of speech of which Vayu is the medium and Indra the Lord.' He accepts the challenge, but is baulked in his attempt to aim his power at the Daemon as the latter is no Birth of the material cosmos. Then Vayu, the Lord of the mid-air, the life-principle who infinitely expands in the mother-element Akasha, returns baffled meeting with the same fate, since the Daemon is no form or force of Cosmic Life of which he is the greatest ruler and God. Then Indra, the Power of the mind, arises and when he approaches It vanishes because It cannot be seized by mind and the sense. But Indra does not turn back from the quest like Agni and Vayu, but moves onward to the sublime ether of the pure mentality and there Uma, the Para Shakti appears; from her he learns that the Yaksha, the Daemon, is Brahman by whom alone the Gods of mind, life and body—Indra, Vayu and Agni—conquer and affirm themselves and who at once is the source and true centre and focus of their greatness.

Uma, the Daughter of Snowy Summits is the Para Prakriti, the Supreme Nature, the highest Power of the Ultimate Truth, the Supreme Consciousness of Brahman. It is from her the whole cosmic action takes its birth, from her the Gods must learn their own truth, for she has the necessary knowledge and consciousness of the One above the lower nature of mind, life and body; and, Creatrix

of the Gods, she mediates between the One above and beyond, and Gods and men here in the lower creation. The import, the lesson, then, of the story of the Gods is that all the life-activities and senses and mind, the functionings of the Cosmic Powers in man must learn to surrender consciously to their One true master-consciousness leaving behind the wrong and false notion of independence and self-will and self-ordering which is an egoism of life and mind and body.

We may note that the name Uma for the Supreme Nature, Mahashakti, is used for the first time in this Upanishad; it is a solitary instance of an early Vedantic scripture mentioning Shakti in the ethereal summits above the Gods and we do not find it in any other major Upanishad. The Puranas and Tantras have familiarised us with the truth about Uma, as the Shakti, the inalienable Power of Shiva.

In the closing passages of the Upanishad, the means of attaining the knowledge of Brahman here on earth, and the winning of the immortal status after departure is indicated. But the lines are really obscure; this is partly due to extreme brevity, and also due to the intention in these texts that the seeker has to learn the secret orally from the teacher or learn it from him in silence. The lines in IV. 4-5 are supposed to lead the seeker to meditate by reflection on the Nature of Brahman and achieve the end by repeated practice. Sri Aurobindo explains the passage 'As is this flash of lightning upon us, or as is this falling of the eye-lid, so in that which is of the Gods' and the one

that follows in the characteristic way that we associate with him, "In the Gods the transfiguration is effected by the Superconscious itself visiting their substance and opening their vision with its flashes until it has transformed them; but the mind is capable of another action....The mind continually remembers that into which it has entered. On this the Self through the mind seizes and repeatedly dwells and so doing it is finally caught up into it and at last able to dwell securely in that transcendence." Is Transcendence and salvation of the individual, the ultimate goal the Upanishad sets for the seeker? Sri Aurobindo recognises the emphasis in the Upanishads steadily increasing on the individual's rejection of the lower cosmic life. This note increases in them as time goes on. But it does not exist in the earlier Vedic revelation where individual salvation is regarded as a means towards a great Cosmic victory. Fortunately the Kena Upanishad suggests the door of escape from over-emphasis in its own statement. "The name of That is 'That Delight', and as That Delight one should follow after it. *He who knows That, towards him verily all existences yearn*" (IV. 6). On this verse, the Master's remarks are noteworthy: "Here is the clue that we need. The connection with the universe is preserved for the one reason which supremely justifies that connection; it must subsist not from the desire of personal earthly joy as with those who are still bound but for help to all creatures. Two then are the objects of the high-reaching soul, to attain the Supreme and to be for ever for the good of all the world even as Brahman

Himself; whether here or elsewhere, does not essentially matter, still where the struggle is thickest..."

Before closing, attention may be drawn to an obvious irregularity in the text itself in IV. 2. It is curious how it has escaped, or was overlooked and explained away by the ancient commentators for centuries before Sri Aurobindo. On this the discerning mind of the classical savant remarks in a footnote: "By some mistake of early memorisers or later copyists the rest of the verse has become hopelessly corrupted. It runs, 'They he first came to know that it was the Brahman', which is neither fact nor sense nor grammar. The close of the third verse has crept into and replaced the original close of the second." (P. 12).

## **SECTION TWO**



# I

## THE FIFTEENTH OF AUGUST

THE 15th of August—once more this great day arrives. It is indeed a greater day than many among the present generation may imagine. The advent of Independence after many a century to a country of continental dimensions is easily a world-event and naturally cherished by her people in spite of the fissure in the unity of India paid for the price of freedom. Whether the cleavage in the geographical unit involving wounds on the cultural, social and economic integer of India can be only patched up or thoroughly healed in course of time naturally or miraculously even as the foreign yoke dropped recently, is a matter that need not concern us here. Nevertheless, the independence won so far is precious and indispensable for the realisation of India's possibilities from now on and in the future that is coming upon us. And the 15th of August is a greater day in a larger sense because it is the day of the advent to this earth of one who foresaw and foretold the advent of the Nation's freedom years ago, and worked for it all along in his own godly way and whose life's mission includes the uplift of Indian Nationalism to

a higher level in which the light of its fuller significance can shine and have its full play and sway for the benefit of the world's peoples.

Yes, it was Sri Aurobindo who received God's message with the gradual unfoldment of its meaning for the Indian nation and spoke it out openly under inspiration. For it was a command and an inspiration that moved him to speak from the Silence, the Supreme Silence in which he was stationed afresh, and this speech which is a Voice of the Silence he made even before the Alipore trial, and therefore before the famous Uttarpara speech. "...God is there, and it is his Mission, and he has something for us to do. He has a work for his great and ancient nation. Therefore, he has been born again to do it, therefore he is revealing himself in you not that you may be like other nations, not that you may rise merely by human strength to trample underfoot the weaker peoples, but because something must come out from you which is to save the whole world."

Some people think whatever he may have done for Nationalism and India's awakening to her strength in the past, he has cut off from public life and taken to Yoga and whatever he may be doing in his seclusion, however precious may be the ideals he formulates, all that has little practical value for the millions, classes as well as masses, except to the chosen few—be it many hundreds, and that is a drop in the ocean of humanity peopling this continent. But this is a superficial thought and is bound to fade once the nature of his mission on

earth is understood and the results or something of the results of the great work he is engaged in is recognised, seen or felt and realised even though by a limited few in the initial stages of the success.

When we look at Sri Aurobindo's life as a whole—leaving aside for the present the mystical inexpressible divine secret of his inner and larger life—in the actual and outer life on the earth, and begin with the date of his birth, it is not difficult to find that the 15th of August is not a mere coincidence on which the two advents have occurred—the Indian independence and the birth of Sri Aurobindo. The truth is that the latter precedes and embraces or is closely linked with the former.

When we consider his speeches and messages, not only during the Swadeshi days, but even on other occasions, and his references to his early life in England as a boy of 14 and his war messages in recent years, two things strike us: one is that there has been a continuous thread of the idea of national independence for India, and the other is a deep and assured consistency, a harmony which may not be quite apparent to the outward looking superficial mind but quite intelligible to the thoughtful and straightforward intelligence.

True, he did cut off from public life for a definite work, for a larger and higher mission. But that never meant that the Indian Nationalism of which he was the great teacher and its true significance for the world were banished from his purview. It is not necessary here to

draw the reader's attention to his manysided activities on a colossal scale in the field of thought, literature and poetry. And even though his outward political action had to continue for a few years only, yet it changed the face of Indian politics and was a powerful factor contributing to the successive movements of fight for the nation's freedom.

How then can we explain his abandoning of the patriot's role for the life of the Yoga and where is the connection between the two, if it is a fact that there has been all along a consistency and harmony in the various aspects of his life? We can very well understand that such a question arises when people think of Yoga as something extraneous, otherworldly and a means for the liberation of the soul. But with Sri Aurobindo the problem is the problem of man, and the solution is the special Yoga for which he has found the way and prepared the road, a Yoga which embraces all life and elevates and changes it, in order to restore it to its rightful place in a higher order, in a God-ordained scheme of human existence. It is childish to think that the problem of man can be postponed to a future when nationalism grows strong and firm and well-protected, and the country's independence finds itself assured to be far out of peril. It is something like waiting for the waves of the rough seas to be stilled and remain calm for the sea-bathers. Under modern conditions, no human group in any part of the globe can be immune from the impacts of other groups from the rest of the world.

Whether man is a political animal of Aristotle or the economic animal of Karl Marx, or a combination of both, the problem of man will ever remain unsolved until it is realised that man is not a mere material body composed of calcium and magnesium minerals and salts. Man is that also, of course; but he is something else and essentially different and more. Political freedom and freedom from economic serfdom for the people of any country are certainly favourable external conditions for a real solution of the problem of man, but they are not the solution itself and cannot resolve the tangle of many knots with which human existence is riddled.

To understand the character of the solution a close knowledge of the intricacies of the problem is a prerequisite. Everywhere the crux of the problem is either missed, evaded or misunderstood. The struggle for existence is there everywhere; it is agrarian here, industrial there; it is for political power and military superiority or for a combination of any or many of these, all under the guise of an aim for the betterment of the people's living in the various parts of the world. It is the story everywhere that has been repeated across the ages with suitable variations according to the circumstances of the times. The situation is bound to continue as long as men have to live by an unhealthy competition everywhere, whether as individuals or as a nation. If living by real co-operation in the place of an unholy rivalry and competitive fighting is to be achieved at all, it can be done only by the establishment of a true harmony among the diverse and discor-

dant interests within man and the extension of such a harmony to social life in the environment. How can this be achieved? It can be done by a change in the human consciousness which sees that man is a spirit in his depths and heights, superior to nature, to life and mind and body. This is the initial change that is aimed at and the rest follows or accompanies the first results.

This conversion of the human consciousness with the concomitant changes that affect and influence the environments and the society has had to confront the cynical doubts or agnostic remnants—though almost negligible now, still alive to some extent—of scientific materialism of the 19th century Europe; and these have, indeed, adverse effect upon the out-flowering of the soul of man in the individual and collective life.

Sri Aurobindo is handling this problem of man. His solution aims at a direct change in the core of the human consciousness. This is no Utopia. Before 1945, men would not have believed in the tremendous and world-devastating potentialities of the atom. But the scientists who were working at the laboratory for well-nigh three decades knew something of the atomic secret and anticipated results, though not exactly as they saw later, but something akin to them. Similarly, the Yogin knows what lies behind the material existence, he knows the Life-force as it is in its native country of the vital world, he knows the Powers and intelligences of the mind-world, and the lines of manifestation of forces that work against human well-being; he knows also the forces that are favourable and

help the human mind to find its source in the cosmic mind and cosmic consciousness; also, he knows the forces that are helpful for man's progress on earth towards the realm of the Supreme Spirit. And all this intimate knowledge he uses for the achievement of the object he has in view.

Sri Aurobindo assures us that the change in the human consciousness, to begin with, is not only possible, it is actual and inevitable. He proclaims this is what he has done for many years now, after forty years of arduous *tapasyā*. God's ways are inscrutable. Whoever could have dreamt the full significance of the God's message he delivered on Jan. 19, 1908, at Bombay?

The work has started and proceeds first here in this hoary land; God has chosen this country to receive his message and put it into practice so that it may in a spontaneous action spread and expand and get into work first in the receptacles that are ready and eventually cover a wider area of the globe. Change, radical change in the consciousness of man is the real solution in the face of which other problems begin to dissolve. This is the true significance and distinguishing feature of Indian Nationalism and Indian culture that God has ordained to be of lasting benefit to mankind.

## II

### IS IT ECLECTICISM?

(*A Reply*)

Readers of *The Advent* are aware that some time ago there appeared in it serially the *Tattwaprabhā*, 'Lights on the Fundamentals' which was later published in book-form in 1950. While it has received a good welcome from the Press and individuals even from distant quarters outside Madras, recently my attention was drawn to a solitary instance of bitter and hostile criticism<sup>1</sup> laden with extravagant injustice meted out to the work by a light-hearted mind tarring it as a 'pointless disservice'. This is so, notwithstanding the Prefatory Note which shows that this treatise was included in the list of works that can be considered as 'service'! Now the object of my writing is not to answer the charges in detail and show that the critic is wrong. A contemptuous silence would have been the only right reply had he not used certain terms and thrown ideas which slyly, if not ambiguously, extend the attack using this small treatise as a jumping board

<sup>1</sup> Vide *The Vedanta Kesari*, Oct. 1951

on the System of Philosophy and Yoga to which I have thoroughly given myself these thirty years and more. The writer is clever and acts the admirer who appreciates *The Life Divine*, ostensibly in order to condemn this book in comparison, but really for a show-off of his learning and catholicity and use whatever information he may have obtained from reading these and similar books for self-gratification, appreciation, and also to sermonise on the probable unsoundness of 'Emergent Evolution' and his proficiency in the field of 'alternate theories'. He is a connoisseur of the art of mnemonic verse composition and refers to Shankara, for comparison, and he has himself or mouths the opinions, ideas, preferences, prejudices and the rest current among Pundits of this school and that. He 'fabricates' a title to this treatise as a 'fabrication' of Eclecticism and all dogma. He finds no theological tradition to support the statements made in the book, i.e. about the system expounded.

It is about this eclecticism and theory and dogma and the alleged absence of theological tradition that I propose to write here, not necessarily to convince the critic of his error but to make the position clear to those who are interested in getting a correct idea and true appreciation of what I have done on the basis of Sri Aurobindo's Teachings.

First about this system: it must be understood at the outset, as I have stated elsewhere, that Sri Aurobindo never wrote anything in the traditional spirit of orthodox exponents of systems, to win support for his teachings.

by proving their conformity to the accepted authorities. He saw that his own realisations bore testimony to the truths embodied in the teachings of the Gita, the Upanishads and last, by no means least, the Rig Veda. Hence he wrote on all these into the details of which I need not enter here. And when he began to build his philosophical system, to write serially *The Life Divine* in the *Arya*, at bottom it was his realisation that gave him the strength but the materials for building the system were undoubtedly provided by the Vedantic scriptures, the Upanishads and the Gita. While later on, in revising the series for publication in two Volumes, he took into account the increasing volume of modern thought that flowed from the West, judged it in proper light and assimilated it into his system. Thus at the base, as he himself has stated, it is Vedantic; at the apex it is his distinct contribution. It is certainly not borrowed from the West—in spite of the term Evolution which in his sense of the term is soul's evolution which is not foreign to ancient Indian thought —cf. Patanjali's *jātyantara pariṇāmaḥ*, only it is there Nature's, here it is soul's. But the further development, and the logical sequel to the evolving soul in man, he envisaged as the one above the mental level. Here too the Upanishad has given him the clue, the hint.

It must be noted that a system is not built out of a previous non-existence; the system-builder does not start with a *nil, tabula rasa*, does not evolve a system out of his brain, he takes up the materials that are already there—in this instance the material has come down from the

Vedic Age down to modern times—tests them, chooses and selects the substantial element, rejects the outworn forms, develops the latent suggestions, gives the system in a finished form, maintaining the structure intact, but supple not rigid so that it can accommodate, if it is comprehensive enough, fresh ideas and details of experiences and truths discovered to fit in with the system and fall into their place in right adjustment.

Here is no theory hatched by brooding in the brain, groping and guessing. He is in line with the ancients—the seers and sages and thinkers—whose tradition he appreciates and admits to be praiseworthy,—the tradition that a philosophy which is not based upon some experience of the fundamental Truth has no value and indeed Indian thought in the religio-philosophical systems abhors speculation and fanciful ingenuity. And Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that in the thinking age which followed the early Vedic and Vedantic Teachings, “when the great and integral truth of the Upanishads was broken into divergent schools of thought, even in giving so much prominence to the intellectual side, the systems do not depart from the constant need of the Indian temperament; it works out from spiritual experience through the exact and laborious inspection and introspection of the intellect—the intellectual method and form whose real substance is not intellectual but a result of a profound intelligence working on the stuff of the sight and spiritual experience.” Therefore if it has been able to make its conclusions articles of faith, it does so on the basis of experience by

any one who will take the necessary means and apply the only possible test. You can call them dogmas; but they are not founded upon flimsy grounds of fancy, on the sands of conjecture, but on the firm and unshaky rock of experience. After all, what is a theory meant to be? If it can serve the purpose for which it is meant, any theory is good enough to hold on. 'A theory may be one-sided or wrong, yet it may be useful and extremely practical as science has amply shown. A theory in philosophy is nothing else than a support for the mind, a practical device to help it to deal with its object, a staff to uphold it and make it walk more confidently and get along with its difficult journey.'

Now it must be borne in mind that the bulk of metaphysical thinking in the West differs fundamentally from the philosophical systems of India. They are hypotheses— theories and dogmas also—and conclusions which are not the result of the Reason working on the stuff of their own experiences and realisations or of others before them as in India beginning from the hoary ages of the Veda and Vedanta and coming down to modern times. However, certain bold thinkers in the West dissatisfied with the philosophies began to choose what they considered to be the best in each of the systems known to them and presented it as a whole, a workable hypothesis. They call it Eclecticism.

A word about the origin and movement of Eclecticism is necessary here to show how ludicrous and inapplicable it is to the *Fundamentals* of Sri Aurobindo's System

itself or even as it is briefly presented in the treatise animadverted upon. In the last century the term 'eclectic' "came to be applied to a number of French philosophers who differed considerably from one another. Of these the earliest were Pierre Paul Royer-Collard who was a follower of Thomas Reid in the main, and Maine de Biran; but the name is more appropriately given to the school of which Victor Cousin," Barthelemy St. Hilaire and a few others were distinguished members. But Victor Cousin whose views carried weight freely adopted what pleased him in the doctrines of Maine de Biran, Royer-Collard and others, "of Kant, Schelling and Hegel, and also of the ancient philosophies, expressly maintained that the eclectic is the only method now open to the philosopher. He was of the view that the philosopher's function resolves itself into critical selection and nothing more. 'Each system', he asserted, 'is not false, but incomplete, and in reuniting all incomplete systems we should have a complete philosophy, adequate to the totality of consciousness.' " This is the latest position of Eclecticism on the Continent. But the eclectic spirit began to manifest itself in the early centuries of the Christian era "when the longing to arrive at the one explanation of all things, which had inspired the older Greek philosophers flagged and the belief that any such explanation was attainable began to fail. Men came to adopt from all systems the doctrine which best pleased them. Panaetius is one of the earliest instances of the modification of stoicism by the eclectic spirit. The same spirit was manifest among the

Peripatetics. Philosophy was a secondary pursuit in Rome; naturally, therefore, the Roman thinkers for the most part were eclectic." A striking illustration is Cicero who borrowed from Stoicism, Peripatecism and the Scepticism of the Middle Academy. "The eclectics of modern philosophy are too numerous to name; Italian philosophers form a large proportion. Among the German Eclectics Wolf and his followers are mentioned and to some extent Schelling." Thus the peregrinations of the speculative mind caught in the circuit of the Eclectical spirit move on ceaselessly without a halt in spite of the fact that it has deservedly acquired a contemptuous significance partly because many eclectics are intellectual trimmers, sceptics or dilettanti. Also, Eclecticism is the result of a combination of principles of different and hostile theories, and must naturally end in an incoherent patchwork. "There can be no logical combination" remarks a writer on the subject whom I have quoted above in parts, "of elements from Christian ethics, with its divine sanction, and purely intuitionial or evolutionary ethical theories, where the sanction is essentially different in quality." Whatever may be its value among the thinkers in the West, it is admitted on all hands that it is a system of thought made up of views borrowed from various other systems.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> How far Eclecticism has thriven on the Western soil and fulfilled the hopes raised of it as the sole solvent of the great problems of Philosophy I need not consider here. But it must be stated that an attempt was made in the last century here in India to build a system of Eclectic Theology and we know the result. Some

This much is enough about the eclectic system to mark out the difference in the basic approach to the ultimate problem in Philosophy between the West and ages-old India; and the latter's line of tackling the ultimate problem has been already indicated in explaining the position of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy in its relation to modern thought as well as to the Wisdom of the mystics and sages of a dateless past. Nowadays, we hear occasionally the aggrieved moanings of patriot purists to the effect that Sri Aurobindo includes in his system many things which are not Indian, but which are either modern, or alien to the Indian philosophical systems. Here it must be stated Sri Aurobindo does not build his system on this ground or that, nor is it claimed for his system that it is partly Indian and partly modern or western, but it is a whole in itself both in theory and practice. For practice, his own personal testimony is the basis; for theory, his own intellectual adequacy is responsible for unearthing the forgotten truths and secrets buried alive in the Vedic texts primarily, and sifting the right and precious materials from other general scriptures of India. The spirit of his intellectual approach is that of the ancient seers and

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notable stalwarts of Bengal sponsored the movement and later Keshab Sen gave a fillip to it by his orations with his standard of revolt raised against social evils and if there has been any modicum of success it is the social reform aspect of the movement. And spiritual seekers, men who were later recognised to be genuine spiritual figures left the Eclectic Theology started with the noble object of doing away with ignoble dogmas and blind worship. Of this Bijoy Goswami is a notable example.

sages and thinkers of this land; this does not bind him to the orthodox notions of what an Indian system ought to be. From the beginning the West has had no opportunity of getting a glimpse into the basis, the direct perception or revelation that is fundamental to his system as to the earlier systems of Indian Philosophy. And as such, the West cannot be accused of or credited with claiming that Sri Aurobindo's system is modern and so western. All that has been done is that he has presented the whole problem and the solution in a language that the modern West can understand, appreciate, accept and even adopt in practice though with hesitancy due to difference in temperament and training, but which the representative section of decadent and fossilised India—not the renascent, rising and arisen India—in the purity of its ignorance, in its zeal to cling to forms and shells and rags could afford to call derisively modern, partly at least un-Indian or by any other name, not certainly *eclectic*. When all is said the fact remains, the Teaching is not for the West or East as such, or Indian orthodoxy or unorthodoxy. It is for Man wherever he be born, here, there or anywhere. When the light enters into dark chambers, its value is realised directly and not judged by referring to the whence of it. Nor do we think of Newton's Gravity as English Gravity, nor when we get oxygen tubes, we say this is American oxygen or German oxygen. But enough of examples. In this spirit, Sri Aurobindo's teaching is given to the world. Though it is not the exclusive monopoly of any country, it being Indian in its birth and substance and base, India

has a better chance of benefiting by it in spite of any section that may act the brake in the rear van representing the atavistic forces in the movement of advanced thought and evolving Spirit.

Now I come to the critic's irrelevant remarks about the unsoundness of the theory of 'Emergent Evolution'. I did not use the term, it has a technical significance implying that it is distinct from 'Creative Evolution'. In the light of what I have stated about the theories and their use in general, I need not concern myself with the 'alternate theories' with which the critic professes to be conversant. The book takes the place of *Pancikarana* and similar *prakarana* treatises where the fundamental principles alone are stated, elucidated and dialectical warfare has no place. Reasonings and arguments in support of the system and demolishing other theories in order to establish itself have value and a place elsewhere, as in some of the *Vārtika* texts to which the critic alludes. In the scheme of such works as these in simple and lucid, almost self-explanatory lines, dialectics is grotesque and out of place.

On the point of this treatise being painted black as 'eclectic' I have to say this much: this treatise undertakes to show that the Creation by the Word, the Seven principles of Existence, the Seven Worlds and Planes and the Ladder of Existence are fundamental to Sri Aurobindo's system, and that these Principles are based upon truths arrived at by the ancients and are founded upon the spiritual and mystic experience of the Vedic

seers, the sages and thinkers of the earlier Vedanta, and later popularised to a certain extent by the Puranas in their usual gross fashion. For this purpose reconciliation was effected between the sevenfold principle of the Rig Veda and the Purana on the one hand, and the fivefold principle of some of the Upanishads and at the same time was explained the triple formula of Sat-chit-ananda as answering to the Uncreate Higher-half, *parārdha*, of the sevenfold existence. The treatise in the opening verses assumed as incontrovertible the fact of the Creation of the world of objects, *artha*, by the Word, *śabda*, as an essential truth of the Vedic and Tantric (*āgamic*) lines of thought. In all this I followed in the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo whose references to these texts are scattered over a number of works including *The Life Divine*. Any one who has had a 'glimpse of the Life Divine' could find that the mottoes selected for the chapters in *The Life Divine* are taken from the sacred texts of ancient India—the Rig Veda, the Upanishads, the Gita and occasionally from the Puranas and even from some of the celebrated treatises of latter day Acharyas. The chapters on the Order of the Worlds, those on the Sevenfold Existence and one or two other chapters have for their mottoes verses from the Rig Veda, lines from the Mundaka and other Upanishads, which all put in a nutshell the substance of these chapters. And sheer common sense—not loud learning—is enough to show that these are not given in an eclectic spirit, but in a large all-embracing spirit which incidentally throws light on the wisdom of the ancients

whose origins are revealed in the Rig Veda; and it is essentially—not always in details and imagery and occult means used by the mystics—preserved in the profound texts of the Upanishads and later in the Tantras, but eventually gets more and more covered and veiled in the Puranas where encrustation reaches its acme of obscuraction. One who does not know or care to know that the pristine source of Indian Theological traditions is to be found in the Vedas, at least can be partly traced to the Vedas and later to the Agamas, will certainly be at a loss to appreciate the fact that some Puranic texts can be directly traced to the Rig Veda, even so the Upanishads, and the occult truths embedded in the Tantras of the Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava.

The critic thinks that the imagery of the Ladder of Existence has nothing to do with any Indian Theology. But the imagery is not my invention. Sri Aurobindo discovered it, but the real Seer-poet who used the figure is a Rig Vedic Seer, thousands of years ago, who says that the seers climbed Indra like a ladder. And in the same opening hymns of the first Book it is further amplified by the statement that the sages journeyed upwards from 'plateau to plateau' or from 'peak to peak'. The ascent by steps, *sopāna āroha*, used in the Purana and the Tantra can be plainly traced to the Truth-vision of Seer Madhucchandas.

This much I have stated on the legitimate assumption that there may be on the critic's part a genuine misunderstanding or ununderstanding of the nature of Indian

Theologies of any persuasion and its relation to Sri Aurobindo's system.

Before closing, it must be stated that this review is no criticism of a genuine critic, it is a wordy pugilism of an objectionable sort, of an irresponsible brood. If hostile criticism can have any sound value, it must be criticism, it must recognise and state the claim of the book, not necessarily to accept it, and in exposing any weakness it must observe certain modes of etiquette, must make at least an effort at measure, sanity, justice. Here is the prefatory Note which mentions that years ago the Master after keeping the MSS. for some time with him gave his word of approval and blessings for appending it to the '*Four Powers of the Mother*' (in Sanskrit), but the verdict of the critic ignores this fact and audaciously passes the unreasoning and malafide sentence of the removal of this book from the list of works dedicated to the service of the Master and his Teachings. At the close of the book, it is clearly stated that this treatise is arc-like, and compared to a *tanvi*, which simile is explained, in order to show that these seventy verses in a compact mould would be sufficient to give an adequate idea of the whole system. The dry-as-dust intellectual formalism and dialectical battle were purposely avoided, as that would be incongruous and out of place in the scheme of the work and defeat its purpose, which like the slender figure of the fair sex, is to be pleasing and attractive to the reader. Notwithstanding statements to this effect, the critic ignoring or seeming to ignore the point of view of the author of

the work, goes on delivering a deathblow to a caricatured effigy of the substance of the book and utters the final word—the ultimate *mantra* for its last journey to the delectation of his own self at least and to the pleasure of those who engaged him to undertake this task. It must be added that it is the sureness of fire-eating instinct that impels him in his scornful temper to a callous temerity of judgement on things which he cannot approach with sympathy of mind and intellectual and spiritual straightforwardness. It is this that has succeeded in pulling down to the common passion-level whatever higher faculties of mind, and general learning and culture he may have developed or acquired—and this is quite manifest in his pronouncement that this book is a 'pointless disservice' made with an air of obviousness in a rude, censorious and inimical tone.

There is an element of irony here. The Journal that has given quarter to this attack gave a very welcome review to this very work when it appeared in print some ten years ago. But times have changed. It is a good luck of all concerned that learned minds of a crude type were not serviceable as reviewers to the Journal at that time.

One word more. The only unprejudiced statement of fact which this reviewer makes as a tribute at the altar of untarnished truth is that the author is an accredited disciple of Sri Aurobindo. Here also I suspect that the 'accredited' is meant to bring into bold relief his own performance and thus to enhance his value to those who are responsible for his envenomed pen which in a single

page has covered a multitude of sins of commission and omission by the author. When I find that the critic is not an ignoramus, but a learned mind though unfortunately given to pugilistic habits, I am reminded of Dr. Johnson saying, 'Why, Sir, a man who talks nonsense so well must know that he is talking nonsense.'

### III

## IS IT ECLECTICISM?

(2)

Under the caption “Sri Kapali Sastry on Sri Aurobindo”, a reply to my article “Is it Eclecticism?” that appeared in the *Advent* of last August is given by the same critic Sri S. S. Raghavachar in *The Vedanta Kesari* (January.) The writer makes a serious attempt to maintain the position he first took up, amplifies his criticism and in his reconsideration of whatever flowed from his pen he has tried to remove the ‘ambiguity’ I had referred to by stating that his critical remarks proceed from his dissatisfaction with the work of the disciple and not with the *Magnum Opus* of the Master himself. I welcome this concession contained in the last part of the sentence, as *The Life Divine* is an admirable production which even the worst opponents of Sri Aurobindo’s teachings dare not dispose of lightly even when they could not or would not appreciate it *in toto*. But this does not mean that the critic accepts the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, the Yoga, the Path, the Goal of mankind, and other kindred matters on which he has written many volumes which put to-

gether are all very much larger in bulk than that of the *Magnum Opus*. His admiration for *The Life Divine* is not in question, but he has stated it because he wants it to be known that he does not find fault with that work and nothing more. If he has dissatisfaction with the disciple's work, he has his own reasons which he has stated in categorical terms. To mention them and to give adequate answers would require as much space as, if not more than double the space, taken up for writing the 'booklet' that has so much offended his (critic's) philosophical sobriety as to unsettle his equable poise in the 'fabrication' of the Daniel's judgment. If I refrain from taking notice of his posers, I have reasons which I shall presently state. I shall later on deal with some of his statements regarding the Master's philosophy and the many schools of philosophy in the West or in India.

The first and foremost reason for my viewing the criticism as not meriting refutation is this: I have stated in the book animadverted upon as well as in my article in the *Advent* the exact nature and purpose of the work viz. to explain throwing light on the Fundamental Concepts of Sri Aurobindo's Teachings. The title of the 'booklet' itself must make it evident to any one who is not unwilling to see. Now to extend the connotation of the title to a title that would suit the convenience of the critic to attack viz. 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo' is unfair, baseless; and that even after my explaining the position to insist that somehow the folly was mine, at any rate I should or must fall into the

error of the critic's choice, is invincible prejudice; if not, what else?

Again, the critic himself states "It is too slender to be taken as furnishing an adequate introduction to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo". For this reason also, *Lights on the Fundamentals* is not the same as an adequate introduction to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. There is another important point that the critic has thoroughly missed. He seems to assume that this 'booklet' purports to be a summary or resume of *The Life Divine* which is not the case. Nowhere have I stated in the book itself or later in my article that it is an introduction to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as presented in *The Life Divine*. I took care to explain 'darśanebhyah' in the plural (p.90). On the previous page it will be found that this work is 'extract from the teachings of Sri Aurobindo' (p.89). By that I meant other works also including the *Secret of the Veda*. If I did not mention the authority from Sri Aurobindo's works for every statement I made it was not necessary as mine is the responsibility for whatever I stated. This is because I had a system formed long ago in my mind that could be based on the traditional wisdom of the ancient mystics from the Rig Vedic times traversing the scriptures of an earlier age, followed by the Upanishads and Agamas of the different sects and Puranas down to our own times. The formation of such a system in my mind was facilitated by Sri Aurobindo's references to the Vedic, Vedantic and Tantric teachings in the various contexts of the subjects he was

dealing with. Since the short treatise was intended to expound the central concepts, it was considered advisable to publish it as an appendix to '*The Four Powers of the Mother*', translated by me into Sanskrit verse. As *The Mother* was mainly intended for Sadhaks and the matter was what related to Sadhana, a clear idea of the fundamental concepts of the Master's teachings being found in the booklet, the Master approved my idea of printing it as an appendix. This fact I had already mentioned. At least now, I hope the critic will see the correctness of my view and his initial error which led him to supplement the title by adding his words to explain what he considers I should have meant. Questionable is the journalistic ethics for a reviewer to indulge in such luxuries. Ancient standard was fairly high and scrupulously maintained by shastraic writers. Old Kumārila demurs to such steps, saying, *yāvad vacanam vācanikam*, 'the meaning actually expressed must be conveyed' and nothing is needed to supplement it.

I might as well stop here having pointed out the erroneous basis of the critic's contention as well as what he calls the main charge that I have not dealt with Sadhana. What I have stated is enough to show that he goes to a wrong shop, knocks and knocks at the wrong door and not finding what he wants quarrels and raises hue and cry instead of blaming himself for want of circumspection before undertaking the unedifying job.

But I proceed to make some observations on some of his statements about the 'eclectic patches', 'Western philo-

sophers' and a few others. What I write here is not quite adequate but is sufficient to point to the direction of my views on the curious and mistaken notions of the critic in respect of some of these topics. Before proceeding I must first dispose of a simple question which shall not be left in suspense. I recognise as genuine the critic's admission that he is not dissatisfied with the Philosophy of *The Life Divine*. I assume therefore that he recognises the synthetic harmony therein as an outstanding fact and that only in my miniature reproduction of it (i.e. *Life Divine*, according to him which I have explained in my denial) it turns out to be an untenable combination of "eclectic patches". Well, it is something to know that he has nothing to say against *The Life Divine*, though he does not expressly state that he accepts the position of man and the goal before him as portrayed in *The Life Divine*; he has conceded so far, and that indeed serves his purpose of tearing to pieces my 'eclectic patches' over which he has very much to quarrel. But one can very easily see that the eclectic bugbear of the critic threatens the teachings of Sri Aurobindo as a whole and as represented in the 'booklet' in question. For whatever scriptural authority was referred to by me whether Veda or Agama, Upanishad or Purana, has been based upon the Master's explicit and lucid statement to the same effect. I stress this fact because the critic strikes at the root of the case I have presented, as an easy step to show that there is no theological tradition to support the Seven Worlds etc. I shall presently show how the critic has fallen into the error of

what seems to him as eclectic. Let me first quote Sri Aurobindo in regard to the world-order: in the *Doctrine of the Mystics* prefaced to the translation of the Hymns of the Atris, he says: "We have the same Cosmic gradation as in the Puranas but they are differently grouped, —seven worlds in principle, five in practice, three in their general groupings" (*Arya*, Vol. II, p. 100). I need not quote in detail the descriptive statements made about them and the intricate world-system of the Vedic mystics which takes a gross shape in a simplified form in the Puranas, and has received adequate treatment in the hands of Sri Aurobindo there, as also elsewhere. But the critic would divine "eclectic patches" of the Vedic, Upanishadic and Puranic patterns in the harmonising of the sevenfold, fivefold and threefold principles and groupings and if the terms used are explained, as for instance, *vijnāna*, or *Janaloka*, with an eagle's eye he would pounce upon it tearing it to pieces labelling them as fanciful interpretations without any basis in what he would call 'Theological Tradition'. I realise and readily concede that the critic writes from genuine conviction and long-held strong views on the matter of theological conceptions that are in vogue in certain quarters, but not universal. But I hold that these views have an erroneous basis and the conviction is one born of equally erroneous notions.

In India the Veda is admitted on all hands to be the fountainhead of all spiritual Wisdom; and the other scriptures, Upanishads, Tantra or Purana are not

unconnected departures from it, but are 'in their essential build and character transmutations and extensions of the original vision and first spiritual experience'. What Sri Aurobindo writes on the real character of these ancient texts stresses the fact that "the Veda gave us the first types and figures as seen and formed by an imaged spiritual intuition and psychological and religious experience. The Veda became to the later scholastic and ritualistic idea of Indian priests and pundits nothing better than a book of mythology and sacrificial ceremonies." This is so in the face of the fact that all the scriptural texts, Upanishads and others proclaim the Vedas as the supreme authority held in great reverence and even Puranas themselves acclaim in portions that they are enlargings, *upabṛhmaṇam*, upon the Vedic truths.

Once we grasp this fact about the character of these different lines of development of sacred literature in India we no longer accept the idea that they are all unconnected departures from the original source in the Vedic texts.

If therefore the seven worlds of the Puranas are traced to the seven Cosmic principles of the Vedic mystics, we are giving a factual interpretation on the authority of the Vedic and Puranic texts themselves. The same applies to certain references I made to the Taittiriya text which also continues the Vedic tradition and uses a language that is in accord with that of its age. Only when we treat these texts as totally unconnected deviations, the 'patches' has room to rear its head. One

important fact that must be borne in mind in this context is that the names used in the Purana signifying the nature of the worlds to which they apply are suggestive and are our main clues to unveil the secret; for instance, when the Puranas say that Narayana reposes on Ananta I would presume that Ananta is the Infinite Prakriti on which he rests, and if a learned critic for the sake of criticism questions me as to the propriety of giving that fanciful meaning while according to his theological and puranic tradition Ananta is Sesha, serpent, the thousand-headed hydra and nothing more, I have no answer but a pitiful look at the stalwart. In the same way *Jana* in *Janaloka* suggests birth or creation which proceeds from Ananda according to the plain texts of the Upanishad.

Now I shall pass on to another interesting argument of Sri Raghavachar against the idea that Tapas is the creative force, or conscious force and that it leads to anthropomorphism. I stand aghast, my readers would laugh out in disgust. I need not quote him in full, nor is it worth an answer on his terms, I can very well imagine he is not a scoffer of the scriptures, but here he uses whatever argument he can summon to his convenience for demolishing my statements. The pity of it is that he forgets for the time being that the Vedas proclaim that by Tapas, He, Prajapati, created, *sa tapo'tapyata*. The idea occurs frequently in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo expounds the principle of Tapas-force as exclusive concentration, in his *Magnum Opus* over which the critic has no quarrel. In my Rig Bhashya

Bhumika, (published last year,) I explained the term occurring in the second verse which I reproduce here as it contains a short but straight answer, as if in anticipation of Sri Raghavachar's criticism. The Supreme "wears the sound-form for body and creates the universe by exhalation and lives with tapas for his life-breath." On this my note runs as follows (I give only the relevant lines): "As the Creator he assumes the form of the primordial Sound, *nāda*, the creative Logos; this Sabda is his body; his life-breath is Tapas which is Consciousness as Force. To show that the Tapas (as explained) is inherent in him an *anthropomorphic* figure is pressed into service on the strength of scriptural authority, that he exhales and the worlds are created. Creation is the natural, effortless outcome of that poise of the Lord, Prabhu."

Sublime ideas, truths that transcend the senses and the reason founded on sense-data have always been expressed in images and figures and symbols from im-memorial times, not only in the ancient scriptures of this land, but by Mystics all over the world. Only the 'rationalist' raises an ineffective objection against the use of images etc. But the one solid reply that can be given to it is Sri Aurobindo's answer (*Vide* his Letters, First Series) to Leonard Woolf's criticism of Mysticism where in the concluding passages he says that there is no deceitful cunning in using metaphors and symbols as in the simile of focus which is surely not intended as an argument but as a suggestive image.

In modern times thinkers of first rank, even when their

system is not labelled spiritual philosophy, have had recourse to figures and images to carry home their conceptions or subtle perceptions, if you like. An appreciative critic of Bergson remarks: "He is occasionally obscure by the squandered wealth of his imagery, his analogies and his illustrations; he has an almost semitic passion for metaphor." Thus, though Sri Aurobindo employs figures and images in illustrative terms to explain what is meant by Tapas and Ananda, he has taken care to deliberate upon them in the language of metaphysical reasoning in his *Magnum Opus*, and for the sake of a clear grasp of the terms he has described that "Tapas is the energising conscious power of Cosmic being by which the world is created, maintained and governed; it includes all concepts of force, will, energy, power, everything dynamic and dynamising. Ananda is the essential nature of bliss of the cosmic consciousness and, in activity, its delight of self-creation and self-experience."

Now I shall proceed to an important aspect of the critic's reasoning in caricaturing as untenable eclectic patches what we consider as a synthetic harmony. I have already mentioned the nature of the Upanishads, Tantra, etc. that are subsequent to and continuation of the teachings of the Vedic Wisdom in spite of their variations in form; and they all branch out from the spirit of the original Scripture. If I find in the *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartrihari something about the Logos I recognise that it has its basis in the Rig Veda, in the *nityā vāk*, the Eternal Word, of Rishi Virupa in the 8th Mandala,

or another line from the Valakhilya hymns of the Rig Veda, *vageva viśvā bhuvanāni jajñe* leaps to my mind and if my listener has ears he will have no difficulty in admitting the truth that the Logos of Bhartrihari is of Vedic origin. Or I turn to the Upanishads. I recognise the Logos in the Pranava, Akshara, Omkara, Udgitha variously described and explained therein, or when I look into the Pancharatra, Shakti Tantra or Shaiva Agama, I recognise the same Logos in the primal *nāda*, *ādya spanda*. The primordial throb which is the same with slight difference in name—but more expressive of the significance—as the *nityā vāk*, of the Rig Veda or Udgitha of the Chhandogya, or Omkara of the Mandukya; well, in the same manner, I can show that the so many 'isms', *vādas*, that hang loosely in the learned mind of the critic as patches without fusing are mostly in their essentials directly traceable to the Upanishads. I carefully omit the Veda here as it is not in vogue for purposes of theological and spiritual discussions, but simply kept in the lumber room though with great respect in theory. But let me state that these *vādas* have for their support the Shruti texts each in its own way for its purpose. But I do not undertake to quote the relevant texts here on which these Acharyas and their *vādas* depend. This much I say here that if I find spiritual monism or *parināma vāda* or any other, I recognise them as rising from the sacred texts. And if any critic comes forward and preaches to me learnedly that what I say is taken from the spiritual monism of Shankara, I have no option but to laugh

and pity my preacher just as any one would if he is told that the Gayatri is taught in the Chhandogya. That the Chhandogya refers to Gayatri is a fact, but originally it is in the Rig Veda of which the learned preacher is obviously ignorant. Similarly there is a passage in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad *tat kena kam paśyet*. When I read it I find that the Shruti refers to an unalloyed Monistic Reality that could be experienced; if I say so my critic would say this is the “ism” of Shankara.

Now that I have finished with the eclectic worm, I should like to bring home the exact nature of this ‘eclectic’ stuff by the illustration of a picture in which various colours and curves figure within the framework on the canvas and any one with eyes on his head could see that it is a picture drawn on a canvas and that the substance and the materials used can be recognised, including the wooden or metallic frame. But a mind which is not inclined to appreciate a coordinated whole can very well say that the green colour is borrowed from the parrot of that garden, the azure from the half-clouded sky, the curve is copied from the distant landscape, the material for frame from the forest etc. In cases of such judgment which resolves a harmonious synthesis into intruding patches, the superior arbiter is a developed conscience and rectitude of the scrutinising eye; more is a matter of opinion of competent minds that count. Again, I am speaking of a tree in its entirety—root and branch, fruit and foliage and stem, but my critical friend’s mind, riddled as it is with patches of my system, considers each part separately and

thinks this is timber in its raw state, that is bark useful for therapy, those are flowers for decoration and so on with the result that their parts, usefulness or different uses cannot be coordinated and so are incongruous elements. Let me quote a passage from Sri Raghavachar in this connection which burns to ashes all the fancied 'patches' that are supposed to make up the whole. "One finds in Sastry's work the emergent evolution of S. Alexander, the intuitionism of Bergson, the spiritual monism of Shankara, the Realism of Ramanuja and Madhava, the Brahma Parinamavada of Bhaskara and Kashmir Saivism, the Logos of Bhartrihari, the Sakti concept of Tantra and the 'Lord' of popular Theism." Well, Sri Raghavachar could go on with many more 'isms', for all is grist that comes to his mill and he is too learned, certainly. But the fact must be told that Sastry was singularly unaware of these systems, except perhaps a superficial idea and second-hand information obtained from later writers who knew or from cheap literature; and it was his fortunate ignorance of these 'isms' in their original and pristine purity that enabled him to study and understand the scriptures in their true set-up while he was hardly out of his teens nearly half-a-century ago, and later led him to appreciate and follow Sri Aurobindo on the one hand and on the other hand equipped him for an upright appraisal of the 'isms' of the West (of the East also), not their downright condemnation as is alleged by Sri Raghavachar.

Sri Raghavachar is emphatic, even extravagant, in the

use of his sharp tongue when he fancies error in others and is generous in his righteous indignation at my basic remark about western metaphysics in general. His comments and stretchings and strictures, as is quite often the case with him, are offensive and beside the mark. The actual line I used is this: "The *bulk* of metaphysical thinking in the West differs fundamentally from the philosophical systems in India." This is the beginning of the passage that has offended his sense of fairplay and justice to western philosophers and he quotes the names of James, Bergson, Kant, Plato etc. Well, it is amazing how he fails to see that I did not mean or say that the West has not progressed and is not slowly or rapidly giving up materialistic thought realising the limitations of Reason. The names he mentions are, certainly worthy names. James was the son of a Swedenborgian mystic and himself contributed a deal to psychology and of all his works the *Variety of Religious Experience* was an eye-opener to the scientist who till then would not believe in the phenomena of a non-material existence which is in some way connected with the physical world. Bergson was rightly styled the 'David destined to slay the Goliath of Materialism' and his *Creative Evolution* is the first masterpiece of the Century. Much more can be said here. But what do all these prove? Can all this be an answer to the question 'Is there a philosophic tradition in the West as is assumed in this land that a philosophic system is an attempt at intellectual presentation of supra-intellectual truths, perceived or experienced by the system-builder'? Sri Ragh-

vachar is loud that mine is a definite error; but he must know I am in good company.

A word about Reason. It has an important place, and is the highest instrument the human mind is endowed with, but it has its limitations. When I was speaking of Sri Aurobindo's system building, I did accord a radical place for experience, for Realisation and added that certain articles of faith, become theories or dogmas, but I did not mean or say that they shall not or can not be put in terms appealing to Reason. Otherwise there would have been no *raison d'être* for *The Life Divine*. I did not undertake to establish the system or reason out the position and in that connection I spoke of what I may call the starting assumptions or dogmas.

I agree that 'there is clearly a need for a criterion to eliminate pseudo-realisations'. Here Reason can take an important part, but how far it can be trusted to solve the difficulty depends upon so many factors some of which pertain to the office and guidance and limitations of Reason itself.

Before putting down the pen for the present, I wish to add that Sri Raghavachar's zealous and loyal reference to *Vedanta Kesari* is understandable but superfluous. I have something very definite to say about the attitude of this esteemed Monthly in this instance, but I refrain from doing so, because of my long-cherished pleasant feeling and regard for the Journal whose noble services to the community are rendered along non-sectarian lines quite in keeping with the great Name that has been the

source of inspiration to so many of us—Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

I note Sri Raghavachar's non-violent ventilations about my 'violence' 'discrediting the accuser', 'the unphilosophical temper' etc. I also note that he does not 'accuse me of absolute originality' and also the occasional spicings of cheap satire which I welcome and appreciate coming as they do from a serious-minded innocent accused.

I trust Sri Raghavachar with his fund of humour would take it all as an instance of 'A Roland for an Oliver'. Indeed, I intended my article to be in the nature of the ancient *yādrśo yaksastādrśo baliḥ*, 'as is the Yaksha, so is the offering.'

## APPENDIX

*Rig Veda I. 164. 45*

*Catwāri vāk parimitā padāni tāni vidurbrāhmaṇā ye  
maniṣināḥ*

*Guhā triṇi nihitā nengayanti turīyam vāco manusyā vadanti.*

Sayana's commentary:

*Vāk* (1st case for the 6th case) *vācaḥ kṛtsnāyāḥ* of the entire speech *padāni* steps *catwāri* four *parimitā* *parimitāni* are measured out. (Tr. Speech in its entirety is measured out in four steps.) *Loke* in the world *yā vāk asti* whatever speech is there *sā* that *caturvidhā* into four kinds *vibhaktā* divided *iti arthāḥ* this is the meaning (Tr. Whatever speech there is in the world is divided into four kinds or classes.) *Tāni padāni* these steps *brāhmaṇāḥ vedavidāḥ* Brahmanas who know the Veda *ye maniṣināḥ manas iṣiṇāḥ* who are movers of the mind *medhāvināḥ* men of understanding *viduh jānanti* know. (Tr. These steps Brahmins who know the Veda and have understanding know.)

*Teṣām madhye* of them (the aforesaid division of steps), *triṇi* three *guhā* (seventh case term is dropped) *guhāyām* in the secrecy *nihitā sthāpitāni* established *na ingayanti na cestante* do not move *na prakāśante* do not come to light

*iti arthaḥ* this is the meaning. (Tr. Three of the four divisions of steps, established in the secrecy, are not manifested.) *Vācaḥ* of the speech *turiyam* the fourth *padam* step manuṣyāḥ men, ajñāḥ those who do not know tad-jñāḥ ca and those who know that vadanti speak *vyaktam uccārayanti* distinctly pronounce, vyavaharanti use (in their dealings). (Tr. The unlearned as well as the wise speak the fourth step of the speech in their dealings).

*Kāni tāni catwari ityatra bahavah svasvamatānurodhena bahudhā varṇayanti* in regard to the question what are these four, many (schools) describe in many ways each according to the view of its school. *Sarvavaidikavāgjālasya* of the collection of all the Vedic words *sangrahrūpā* comprehensive or inclusive or summary forms *bhūrādayah* Bhuh etc. *tisro vyāhṛatayah* the 3 Vyahritis (sacred utterances) *pranavah ekaḥ* one Om *iti* thus *vedatrayasāratvāt tāsām* those Vyahritis being the essence of the 3 Vedas *vyāhṛtināmeva sārasamgrahbhūtavāt* (Pranava being) the summary substance of those Vyahritis, containing the letter A etc. (AUM)—(for this reason) *sapraṇavāśu vyāhṛtiṣu* in the Vyahritis along with Pranava *sarvā vāk* all speech *parimitā* is measured out *iti* thus *kecana vedavādino* some Vedists *vadanti* say. (Tr. Some Vedists say that all speech is measured out in the Vyahritis with Pranava which is constituted of the letter A etc. and which itself is the summary substance of the 3 Vyahritis which again are the Bhuh etc. the comprehensive and all inclusive forms of all the collection of the Vedic words. Thus the

three Vyahritis and one Pranava make up the four in which all speech is measured out.)

*Apare vyākaraṇamatānusāriṇo nāmākhyātopasarganipātabhedenā* Others, followers of the school of grammarians say (that the four consists of) the division of *nāma*, *ākhyāta*, *upasarga* and *nipāta*.

*Kriyapradhānamākhyātam* That is verb *ākhyāta* in which action is prevalent.

*Dravyapradhānam nāma* Nama (noun) is that in which substance is predominant.

*Prāgupasṛjyata ākhyātāpadaṣyetyupasargah prādīḥ*

The Upasarga *pra* etc. is so called because it is placed before a verbal word.

*Uccāvaceśvartheṣu nipataṇānnipātah api tu ca ityādīḥ* Nipata, a particle *api tu ca* etc. is so called because it falls down upon (words of) uneven meanings.

*Eteṣveva sarvā vākparimitā iti (vadanti)* In these four alone all speech is measured out—so they say;

*akhandāyāḥ kṛtsnāyā vācaḥ caturdhā vyākṛtattvāt* because the all speech which is indivisible is separated or analysed into four divisions.

*Vāgvaiparācyavyākṛtāvadat tāmindromadhyatovakramva vyākarot tasmādiyam vyākṛtā vāgudyata iti śruteḥ*

(This is part of a passage from Taittiriya Samhita quoted by Sayana to support the statement of fourfold differentiation of the Speech which was beyond and undifferentiated.)

Speech verily was beyond and undifferentiated. Indra stepped down into her and spoke, therefore she became

differentiated, and this speech is spoken. (This is the quoted part of the Shruti.)

*Anye tu yajñikāḥ mantrāḥ kalpo brāhmaṇam caturthī laukikīti* Others, votaries of Sacrifice (say) Mantra, Kalpa, Brahman and the fourth ordinary speech in the world.

*Yājnikaiḥ samāmnātonuṣṭheyārthaaprakāśako vedabhāgo mantrāḥ* The Mantras are that division of the Veda that is recited which illumines the meaning of what is performed or observed.

*Mantravidhānapratipādako vedabhāga iti mantrāḥ kalpotah ūrdhvamityādinoktaḥ kalpah* (this is a quotation of Sayana from the Kalpa literature) The division of the Veda which teaches the use of mantras, the Kalpa etc. has been declared (in the Sastra).

*Mantratātparyārthaaprakāśako vedabhāgo brāhmaṇam* The Brahmana is the portion of the Veda which throws light on the meaning of the purport of the mantras.

*Bhogavिषयां गामानयेत्यादिरूपां व्यावहारिकी* The speech of which wordly enjoyment such as 'bring the cow' etc. is the object is *vyāvahārikī* the speech of common dealings in the world.

*Eṣveva sarvā vāk niyamiteti yājnikāḥ* The votaries of Sacrifice hold that in these (four) all speech is (contained), 'measured out'.

*Rgyajuhsāmānicaturthī vyāvahārikīti nairuktāḥ* Those of the Nirukta school say that the rik, yajus, saman and the fourth is the common speech for dealings in the world.

*Sarpāṇām vāgvayasām kṣudrasarīṣpasya ca caturthī*

*vyāvahārikītyaitihāsikāḥ* The followers of legendary tradition hold the speech of serpents, of birds, of vile reptiles, and the fourth is the speech in dealings in the world.

*Paśuṣu tūṇaveṣu mṛgeṣu ātmani ca iti ātmavādināḥ*

The Atmavadins (votaries of Atman) say: in the animals, in musical instruments such as flute, in the beasts and in the soul, the fourfold speech is contained.

*Apare māntrikāḥ prakārāntareṇa pratipadāyanti parā paśyanti madhyamā vaikharīti catvārīti* Others of the school of Mantra(Tantra)teach in a different way: the four are the Para, Pashyanti, Madhyama, Vaikhari according to them.

*Ekaiva nādātmikā vāk mūlādhārāduditā satī parā* *ityucyate*  
The speech, only one in the form of Sound, rising from the centre of the Solar plexus is called Para.

*Nādasya ca sūkṣmatvena durnirūpatvāt saiva hradyagāminī paśyanti* *ityucyate* *yogibhirdraṣṭum śakyatvāt* Being subtle and not demonstrable, the same sound entering the heart is called Pashyanti because of Yogins being able to perceive it.

*Saiva buddhim gatā vivakṣām prāptā madhyamā* *ityucyate*  
The same entering the *buddhi*, understanding, and desiring to express (to speak) is called Madhyama.

*Madhye hradayākhyā udīyamānatvāt madhyamāyāḥ*  
Same in the centre or middle called Hridaya the Madhyama rises.

*Atha yadā saiva vakte stithā tālvoṣṭhādivyāpāreṇa bahi-nirgacchati tadā vaikhari* *ityucyate* Then when the same

Nada comes out for expression through the exertion of the lips, teeth etc. it is called Vaikhari.

*Evam catvāri vācaḥ padāni parimitāni* Thus are the four steps of the Speech measured out.

*Maniṣināḥ manasāḥ svamināḥ svādhinamanaskā brāhmaṇā vācyasya śabdabramaṇo’dhigantāro yogināḥ parādicatvāri padāni viduh jānanti*

Wise men, masters of mind, with mind under their own control, Brahmans, knowers of Shabdabrahman to be expressed, yogins know the steps to be four, Para etc.

*Teṣu madhye trīṇi parādīni guhā nihitāni hr̥dayāntarvar-  
tittvāt* Of these, three steps Para etc. are placed in the secrecy because of their being inside of the heart.

*Turiyam tu padam vaikhariṣanjñakam manusyāḥ sarve vadanti* But the fourth step, Vaikhari by name, all men speak.

*Vyākaraṇaprasiddhānāmākhyātādipakṣe maniṣino brāhmaṇāḥ prakṛtipratyayādīvibhāgajñā vāgyogavidastāni padāni jānanti* On the side of Nama, Akhyata etc. celebrated in Grammar, the wise Brahmans, knowers of the divisions of base, suffix etc., knowers of word-arrangement (speech set-up) know those steps.

*Avāgyogavidaḥ pāmarā vāco vāngmayasya turiyam catur-  
tham bhāgam vadanti, vyavaharanti* Those who do not know the arrangement of speech i.e. the unlearned, speak the fourth part of speech in their dealings.

*Arthaprakāśnāya prayunjate* They apply it (knowledge) for making the meaning clear.

*Ayam mantro nirukte vyākhyātah* This mantra is explained in Nirukta.

*So'trāpyanusandheyah* Here also that must be calmly considered.

(Here follows the quotation from Nirukta 13.9)

*Athāpi brāhmaṇam bhavati* Then there is the Brahmana text (in this context),

*sā vai vāk sṛṣṭā caturdhā vyabhavat* that very speech released became manifested into four,  
*eṣeva lokeṣu trīṇi paśuṣu turiyam* in these (three) worlds there are three steps of speech and the fourth is in the creatures.

*Yā prthivyām sāgnau sā rathantare* That which is in earth that is in Agni, that is in Rathantara (name of a Saman).

*Yāntarikṣe sā vāyāu sa vāmadevye* That which is in the mid-air region, that is in the Vayu, that is in Vamadevya.

(Saman)

*Yā divi sāditye sā brhati sa stanayitnau* What is in the Heaven, that is in the Aditya, that is in Brihat (Saman), that is in the lightning.

*Atha paśuṣu* Then in the creatures,

*tato yā vāgatiricyata tām brāhmaṇeṣvadadhuh* then whatever speech remains transcended that was placed in the Brahmanas.

*Tasmādbrāhmaṇā ubhayīm vācam vadanti yā ca devānām yā ca manusyānāmiti* Therefore the Brahmans speak the twofold speech—that which is the speech of the Devas and that which is the speech of the men.











